

THE
TRAGEDIES
OF
SOPHOCLES,

TRANSLATED FROM THE
GREEK;
(With a DISSERTATION ON ANTIENT TRAGEDY.)

By the Rev. THOMAS FRANCKLIN, M. A.
LATE
GREEK PROFESSOR in the University of
CAMBRIDGE.

A NEW EDITION, carefully revised and corrected.

VOL. I.

Nulla Sôphocleo veniet jactura cothurno.



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THE
TRAGEDIES
SOPHOCLES



TRANSLATED FROM THE
GREEK BY
G. R. NICHOLS

(With a Dissertation on Ancient Tragedy.)
By the Rev. THOMAS FRANKLIN, M.A.
LATE
GRAND PROVOST &c. of the University of
CAMBRIDGE

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Vol. I.

A perfect state was made, but it was only
for the purpose of being used as a model
for the poet to follow, and not to be
used as a model for the poet to follow.
The poet should be allowed to follow
the model as he sees fit, and not be
bound to follow it exactly. The poet
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Printed for T. DAVIES, in Russell-Street,
Great-Gearn - 1788.

T O H I S
ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
PRINCE of WALES.

May it please your ROYAL HIGHNESS.

ANTIENT tragedy in it's pure and perfect state was made subservient only to the noblest purposes, and sacred to truth, religion and virtue. This species of the drama attain'd to it's highest degree of perfection in the time, and under the direction of the immortal Sophocles, the acknowledged prince of tragic poets, the admiration of all Greece, the envy of his cotemporaries, and in a word, the Shakespear of antiquity.

SUCH is the work, and such the author, which I have the honour to present to your ROYAL HIGHNESS. That a writer so universally applauded, should never yet have been

DEDICATION.

seen in an English habit (for the disguises, which he has hitherto worn, are not worthy of that name) is certainly a matter of astonishment; but Sophocles seems purposely to have waited for the present happy opportunity of making his first appearance amongst us, under the patronage of your ROYAL HIGHNESS; a circumstance, which has made him ample retribution for all our former slight and neglect of him. The author of the following sheets, though conscious of his own inabilities, and the difficulty of the task which he has undertaken, approaches your ROYAL HIGHNESS with confidence, as satisfy'd that the same kindness and humanity, which induced your ROYAL HIGHNESS to accept these volumes, will also pardon their errors and imperfections; and at the same time flatters himself that the rest of his readers will pay some deference to so illustrious an example.

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS will pardon me, if, with my warmest acknowledgments on this occasion, I take the liberty to mingle my hearty congratulations on this day's solemnity: the world of letters, and the circle
of

DEDICATION.

of arts and sciences, have a peculiar interest in every thing that concerns their patron and protector : permit me therefore in their name to wish your ROYAL HIGHNESS that health, happiness and prosperity, on which their own must in a great measure depend : permit me to wish that Britain under your ROYAL HIGHNESS's influence may become the darling seat of taste and genius, the throne of literature, and the constant residence of honour, freedom, piety and virtue : this, may it please your ROYAL HIGHNESS, is the wish, this is the well-founded hope of all, and of none more truly, firmly, and sincerely, than

May it please your ROYAL HIGHNESS,

Your ROYAL HIGHNESS's

most devoted, obliged,

and obedient servant,

June, 4th, 1759.

THOMAS FRANCKLIN.

DEDICATION

of arts and sciences, have a peculiar interest
in every thing that concerns their patron and
protector: permit me therefore in their name
to wish your Royal Highness that health,
happiness and prosperity, on which their own
trust in a great measure depend: permit me
to wish that Britain under your Royal
Highness's influence may become the seat
of learning, of taste and genius, the focus of
literature, and the constant residence of
honour, freedom, piety and virtue: this
may I think your Royal Highness is the
wish, this is the well-founded hope of all,
and of none more truly, firmly, and anxiously
than

May I please your Royal Highness

Your Royal Highness

most devoted, obliged,

and obedient servant,

June 1759

THOMAS FRANKLIN



A
DISSERTATION
ON
ANTIENT TRAGEDY.



WHILST the taste, genius, and knowledge of the ancients, have been universally felt and acknowledged in every other part of polite literature, it is matter of admiration to consider, that the Greek Theatre should so long have remain'd in neglect and obscurity. In philosophy, morals, oratory, and heroic poetry, in every art and science, we look back to Greece, as the standard and model of perfection: the ruins of Athens afford, even to this day, fresh pleasure and delight; and, nothing but her stage seems to be forgotten by us. Homer, Xenophon, Demosthenes, and many other eminent Greek writers, have of late years put on an English habit, and gain'd admission even into what is call'd polite company; whilst Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, still lurk in schools and colleges; and very seldom make their appearance, at least with dirty leaves, in the libraries of the great. To what shall we attribute a judgment so capricious and so unaccountable? partly, perhaps, to the hasty severity of ignorant foes, and partly to the outrageous zeal of * mistaken friendship. The fate of Antient Tragedy hath, indeed, been singularly unfortunate: some painters have drawn too flattering a likeness of her; whilst others, have presented us with nothing but a caricature; some exalt

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* The remarks which are handed down to us on Antient Tragedy, have hitherto, for the most part, consisted of mere verbal criticisms, various readings, or general and trite exclamations of undistinguishing applause, made by dull and phlegmatic commentators, totally void of taste and judgment; add to this, that the old tragedians have been shamefully disguised and misrepresented to the unlearned by the false medium of bad translations.

the Greek drama, as the most perfect of all human compositions, without the least spot or blemish; whilst others affect to call it the infant state of the stage, weak, infirm and imperfect; and as such, treat it with the highest degree of negligence and contempt: exaggerated thus on the one hand by the extravagant encomiums of injudicious learning, and debased on the other by the rash censures of modern petulance, it's real and intrinsic merit hath never been thoroughly known, or candidly enquired into: the best method however in this, as in every other disputed point, is to set aside all prejudice and authority, and determine the cause by our own reason and judgment, from a fair, full, and impartial view of it.

THAT the spectator may be able to form a proper and complete idea of any object presented to him, it is necessary to place him in such a situation, as that his eye may at once comprehend the whole, and every part of it; for this purpose, I have collected and ranged in order a few materials, which, in the hands of some abler writer, may possibly lay the foundation for a complete history of the Antient Drama; in the mean time, the following sheets confine themselves to, and pretend to no more than, a brief account of the origin and progress of the Greek Tragedy; it's end and purport, the several parts, properties, and conduct of it; the construction, scenery, and decorations of the theatre; to which is added, a transient, but necessary view of the genius, character and situation, religion, morals and politics of the people, before whom it was represented; together with a short sketch of the lives and characters of the three great tragedians.

On the Origin of TRAGEDY.

NOTHING is more agreeable to the inquisitive mind, than to trace the gradual improvement of any art or science; to mark the causes of its growth and culture, and pursue it through its various stages of perfection: it is much to be lamented therefore, that neither Aristotle, nor any other writer on Ancient Tragedy, hath given us an exact or regular account of its progress and advancement from the time of its birth to that of its maturity and splendor; the few scatter'd anecdotes, which remain concerning it, rather serving to awaken our curiosity than to afford us any full and satisfactory information.

TRAGEDY was, in its infancy, like every other production of human art, extremely weak, low, and contemptible: that wide and deep stream, which flows with such strength and rapidity through cultivated Greece, took its rise from a small and inconsiderable fountain, which hides itself in the recesses of antiquity, and is almost buried in oblivion: the name alone remains to give us some light into its original nature, and to inform us that Tragedy, like every other species of poetry, owed its birth to religion.

TRAGEDY, or the * song of the goat, was only a sacred hymn. Bacchus, we are told, the first cultivator of vines,

* From *Τραγος*, a goat, and *ωδή*, a song. The commentators not content with this most natural and obvious interpretation, have given us several others. Some of them turn *Τραγωδία* into *Τρυγωδία*, and so derive it from *Τρυξ*, the lees of wine, with which we are told the actors smeared their faces: others inform us, that

Τρυξ

vines, imparted his secret to a petty prince in Attica, named Icarius, who, happening one day to espy a goat, browsing on his plantations, immediately seized and offered him up as a sacrifice to his divine benefactor : the peasants assembled round their master, assisted in the ceremony, and express'd their joy and gratitude, in songs and dances on the occasion ; the † sacrifice grew into a festival, and the festival into an annual solemnity, attended most probably every year with additional circumstances, when the countrymen flocked together in crowds, and sung in rustic strains the praises of their favourite deity. The rural sacrifice became, in process of time, a solemn feast, and assumed all the pomp and splendor of a religious ceremony ; poets were employed by the magistrate to compose hymns or songs for the occasion : such was the rudeness and simplicity of the age, that their bards contended for

Τρυφή signifies, new wine, a skin of which was, it seems, usually given to the poet (like the butt of sack to our laureats) as a reward for his labours : but I shall not trouble my reader with the enumeration of their whimsical conjectures.

† This story is told by Brumoy, and by twenty others, with little variation. It seems, notwithstanding, to carry with it the air of a fiction, so far as it regards Icarius, who seems only to have been introduced because Icaria was famous for vines, and (as Spon tells us in his voyage to Italy) was the first place where they sacrificed a goat to Bacchus, and also, where tragedies and comedies were first exhibited ; but surely the song of the goat might be accounted for, without application to any particular person. Bacchus, being the acknowledged inventor and cultivator of the vine, it was most natural that the first planters should sacrifice to him the destroyers of it ; the goat being a creature as remarkably fond of the leaves of the vine, as his sacrificer was of the juice of the grape ; we shall find that he fell a victim not to Bacchus alone ; and that the poet, as well as the god, came in for a share of him.

for a prize, which, as † Horace intimates, was scarce worth contending for; being no more than a goat or skin of wine, which was given to the happy poet, who acquitted himself best in the task assigned to him.

THIS was probably the period when Thespis first pointed out the tragic path, by his introduction of a new personage, who relieved the chorus or troop of singers, by reciting part of some well-known history or fable, which gave time for the chorus to rest. All that the actor § repeated between the songs of the chorus, was called an episode or additional part; consisting often of different adventures which had no connection with each other. Thus the chorus, or song, which was at first the only, and afterwards the principal performance, became gradually and insensibly but an inconsiderable, though, as we shall see hereafter, a necessary and ornamental part of the drama.

FROM this time, we may imagine, the actor or reciter was more attended to than the chorus; however his part was executed, it had the powerful charms of novelty to recommend it, and quickly obscured the lustre of the chorus, whose songs were now of a different nature, inso-much, that the original subject of them, the praise of Bacchus, was by degrees either slightly mentioned, or totally passed over and forgotten: the priests, who, we may suppose, for a long time presided over the whole, were alarmed at so open a contempt of the deity, and unanimously

† Vilem certavit ob hircum.

Art. Poet.

§ When Tragedy assumed a regular form, these recitations which, during its imperfect state, were only adventitious ornaments, became the principal and constituent parts of the drama, the subject of them, drawn from one and the same action, retaining their first name of episode.

mously exclaimed, that all this ¶ was nothing to Bacchus; the complaint grew into a kind of proverbial saying, and as such is handed down to us.

FROM the origin of tragedy, to the days of Theſpis, and from his time to that of Æſchylus, all is doubt, conjecture and obscurity; neither Aristotle, nor any other antient writer, give us the least insight into the state and progress of the Greek drama: if his treatise called * *Διδασκαλίας* had reached posterity, it would probably have afforded us much pleasure and instruction: the names of a few, and but a few tragedians, during this dark period, are handed down to us: such were † Epigenes, the Sicyonian, and Pratinas, who wrote fifty plays, thirty-two of which are said to have been satyrical: after Theſpis, came his scholar Phrynicius, who wrote nine tragedies, for ‡ one of which we are told he was fined fifty drachmas, because he had made it (an odd reason) too deep, and too affecting: there was also another Phrynicius author of ¶ two tragedies; to these we must add § Alcæus, Phormus, and ¶ Chœrilus; together with Cephisodorus, an Athenian, who wrote the Amazons, and Apollophonies, supposed to have been the author of a tragedy, named Daulis; though Suidas is of another opinion.

TRA-

¶ *ἔθεν πρὸς Διονύσιον.*

■ This treatise contained an exact account of the names, times, and authors of all the plays that were ever acted.

† The *Bacchæ*, a tragedy of his, is cited by Athenæus.

‡ See Strabo, Herodotus and Plutarch.

¶ Called *Andromeda* and *Erigone*.

§ Mentioned by Macrobius and Pollux.

¶ Chœrilus is said to have written no less than a hundred and twenty tragedies.

TRAGEDY, during the lives of these writers, had in all probability made but a slow progress, and received very little culture or improvement, when at length the great Æschylus arose, who from this rude and undigested chaos created as it were a new world in the system of letters. Poets, and even epic poets there might perhaps have been before Homer; dramatic writers there certainly were before Æschylus, the former notwithstanding we may with the utmost propriety stile the inventor and father of heroic poetry, and the latter of the antient drama, which before his time doth not appear to have had any form, shape or beauty. He first introduced dialogue, that most essential part of tragedy, by the addition of a second personage, threw the whole fable into action, and restored the chorus to it's antient dignity.

ÆSCHYLUS, having like a tender parent endow'd his darling child with every mental accomplishment, seem'd resolved that no external ornaments should be wanting to render her universally amiable: he cloathed her therefore in the most splendid habit, and bestow'd on her every thing that art cou'd procure to heighten and improve her charms. We know, from good authority, that fifty years before his time Thespis exhibited his rude performances in a cart, and besmear'd the faces of his actors with the lees of wine, probably to disguise their persons and give them the appearance of those whom they represented; but Æschylus, who as being himself author, actor, and manager, took upon him the whole conduct of the drama, did not neglect any part of it; he improved the scenery and decorations, brought his actors into a regular and well-constructed theatre, raised his heroes on the cothurnus or buskin, invented the masques, and introduced

duced splendid * habits with long trains that gave an air of majesty and dignity to the performers.

FROM the time when tragedy began to assume a regular form, we find her closely following the steps of epic poetry; all the parts of the epopée, or heroic poem, may be traced in tragedy, though, as Aristotle observes, all the parts of tragedy are not to be found in the epopée; whence the partisans of the stage with some reason conclude, that perfection in the former is more difficult to be attain'd than in the latter. Without entering into this dispute, we may venture however to stile † Homer the source and fountain of the Antient drama; from him the tragedians drew the plan, construction, and conduct of their fables, and not unfrequently the fable itself; to him they applied for propriety of manners, character, sentiment and diction.

FROM this æra then, we are to consider tragedy as an elegant and noble structure, built according to the rules of art, symmetry and proportion; whose every part was in itself fair, firm and compact, and at the same time contributed to the beauty, usefulness and duration of the whole edifice. Sophocles and Euripides carefully studied the plan laid down by Æschylus, and by their superior genius and judgment improved it in a short time to it's highest

..... personæ, pallæque repertor honestæ
 Æschylus, & modicis intravit pulpita tignis,
 Et docuit magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno. HOR.

† Homer, says Aristotle, was the first, who *μυμησιν διαματι-
 νασε τραγωδίας*, invented dramatic imitations. 'There was no more
 ' left for tragedy (says Lord Shaftsbury) than to erect a stage, and
 ' draw his dialogues and characters into scenes, turning in the same
 ' manner upon one principal action or event, with regard to place
 ' and time; which was suitable to a real spectacle.'

See Characterist. vol. II.

highest state of perfection, from which it gradually declined to the introduction of the Roman drama.



On the Parts of Antient TRAGEDY.

AMONGST many other erroneous opinions concerning the Greek tragedy, adopted by modern editors and commentators, the unwarrantable division, which they have made of it into * acts, is perhaps the most remarkable, as there doth not seem to be the least ground or foundation for it: in the first place, neither Athenæus, nor any of the antient writers, who have given us quotations from the Greek plays, mention the act where the several passages are to be found; which they would most naturally have done, had any such division ever taken place. It may be likewise observed, that the word † Act does not once occur in that treatise of Aristotle, which gives us so exact a definition of every part of the Greek drama; add to this, that the tragedies themselves carry with them sufficient proof that no such thing was ever thought on by the authors of them; notwithstanding which, ‡ Vossius, Barnes, and several other editors have discovered an office of the chorus, which the poet never assigned them, namely, their use in dividing the acts, the intervals of which were supplied by their
b songs;

* See a dissertation on this subject, by Mons. Vatry, in the hist. de l'acad. vol. 8, p. 183.

† The word *ᾠδή*, which we translate an act, signifies the whole performance, or drama, and could not possibly therefore mean any one particular part of it.

‡ Chorus, says Vossius, *pars fabulae post actum, vel inter actum & actum.* See *inst. poet.* l. 1.

songs; though it is evident that the business of the chorus (as will sufficiently appear in the following account of it) was, on the other hand, to prevent any such unnatural pause or vacancy in the drama, as the division into acts must necessarily produce; besides that, if we take the word act in that sense which the modern use of it demands, we shall find it in the Greek tragedies composed sometimes of a single scene, and sometimes of half a dozen; and || if the songs or intermedes of the chorus are to determine the number of acts, the play will consist not always of five, according to our own custom, but at one time of only three, and at another of seven or eight.

§ Horace has indeed told us, that there should be but five acts; but it does not from thence follow that it always was so: the truth after all is, that this mistake, as well as many others, arose from an error common to almost the whole race of writers and critics on antient tragedy, who have unanimously agreed to confound the Greek

|| On looking into the choruses of Sophocles as they stand in the original, we find that the Ajax, besides the *κομμοι* (which will be explained hereafter) has five, which are thus unequally divided; to the first act two; the second one; the third one; the fourth one; the fifth none at all: the Trachinise has six; the Electra but three; and the Philoctetes but one regular song or intermede in the whole play. If it be granted therefore, as I think it is on all hands, that wherever we meet with strophe and antistrophe, and there only we are to conceive that the chorus sung, nothing can be more absurd than to make those songs dividers of the acts, when it is evident that the chorus sung only as occasion offered, and the circumstances of the drama required, which accounts for the irregularity and difference in the numbers of them. If the reader will take the trouble to examine the antient tragedies, he will find what I have said confirmed in every one of them.

§ Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actus.

Greek and Roman drama, concluding them both to be governed by the same laws, though they are in many parts essentially different: they never allow for the time between Aristotle and Horace, but leap from one to the other with the utmost agility: it is plain, however, from * the reasons here mentioned, that the antient Greek tragedy was one continued representation from beginning to end.

THE division into acts therefore is undoubtedly a piece of modern refinement; which, as much may be said on both sides, I shall not stop either to condemn or approve, but proceed to the only division which the antients ever made; a division, which nature points out to this and every other composition, viz. a † beginning, a middle, and an end; or, in the words of Aristotle, the prologue, the episode, and the exode.

THE PROLOGUE of antient tragedy, was not unlike the *πρόοιόν* or overture in music, or the proœ-

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mium

* Many other reasons equally forcible might be alledged, some of which the reader will find scattered about in the notes to my translation of Sophocles. I shall only observe here, that the old editions of the Greek tragedies, so far from dividing them into acts, do not so much as make the least separation of the scenes; even the names of the persons are not always properly affixed to the speeches: no notice is taken of the entrances and exits of the actors; the asides are never marked, nor any of the gestures or actions, which frequently occur, pointed out to us in the margin; defects which, however inconsiderable, may mislead the young and injudicious reader, and which ought therefore to be carefully supplied by the critic or translator.

† The cause and design of undertaking any action are, the beginning; the effects of those causes and the difficulties we find in the execution of that design are, the middle; the unravelling and resolving those difficulties are, the end.

See Boileu's treatise on epic poetry.

mium in oratory, containing all that part of the drama, which † preceded the first song, or intermede of the chorus.

WHAT Aristotle calls the prologue should contain, according to the antient critics, all those circumstances which are necessary to be known for the better understanding and comprehension of the whole drama, as, the place of the scene, the time when the action commences, the names and characters of the persons concern'd, together with such an insight into the plot as might awaken the curiosity of the spectator without letting him too far into the design and conduct of it. This, however easy it may seem at first view, is so difficult, that it has scarce ever been perform'd to any degree of perfection. Of the Greek tragedians, Sophocles alone seems to have succeeded in this particular, the prologues of || Æschylus being quite rude

† Aristotle must certainly be understood to mean not the first entrance, but the first song or intermede of the chorus; because, as Dacier and other writers have observed, there are tragedies (as the *Perse* and *Suppliants* of Æschylus) where the chorus enters first on the stage and opens the play: to such therefore, if Aristotle meant the speaking and not the song, there would be no prologue; a contradiction which is avoided by understanding what is here said of the *πρόσῳδον*, or first song, which never begins till the prologue is over, and matter furnished to the chorus for the intermede.

|| According to this rule, the prologues of Æschylus and Euripides will by no means stand the test of examination; that part of the tragedy, which precedes the first song of the chorus being often employed, by those writers, either in absurd addresses to the spectators, or in the relation of things extremely foreign to the purpose of the drama, frequently anticipating the incidents and circumstances of the play, and even sometimes acquainting the audience before-hand with the catastrophe; all of them capital errors, which the superior judgment of Sophocles taught him carefully to avoid.

rude and inartificial, and those of Euripides for the most part tedious and confused.

THE EPISODE is all that part of the tragedy, which is between the songs or intermedes of the chorus: this answers to our second, third, and fourth act, and comprehends all the intrigue or plot to the unravelling or catastrophe, which in the § best antient writers is not made till after the last song of the chorus; the conduct and disposition of the Episode may be consider'd as the surest test of the poet's abilities, as it generally determines the merit, and decides the fate of the drama. Here all the art of the writer is necessary to stop the otherwise too rapid progress of his fable, by the intervention of some new circumstance that involves the persons concern'd in fresh difficulties, awakens the attention of the spectators, and leads them as it were insensibly to the most natural conclusion and unravelling of the whole.

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THE

§ Sophocles, who was certainly the most correct of the three great Tragedians, has, I think, observed this rule in all his plays but two, viz. Ajax and OEdipus Tyrannus; for, if the death of Ajax is the catastrophe of that tragedy, it is over long before the last song of the chorus; if the leave granted to bury him be the catastrophe, as some critics contend, the episode is confined within its proper limits: but this cannot be allowed without attributing to this piece what is a still greater blemish, a duplicity of action; a dramatic crime, of which Sophocles in that play I am afraid cannot easily be acquitted. In the OEdipus Tyrannus it is observable, that the total discovery of OEdipus's guilt is made before the last song of the chorus, and becomes the subject of the intermede.

* Brumoy compares the fable of a good tragedy to a large and beautiful temple, which the skill of the architect hath so contrived as to make it appear at first view of much less extent than it really is, wherein the farther you advance, the more you are surpris'd at the vast intervening space, which the extraordinary symmetry and proportion of its parts had concealed from the eye.

THE EXODE is all that part of the tragedy, which is recited after the chorus has left off singing; it answers to our fifth act, and contains the unravelling, or catastrophe of the piece; after which, it is remark'd by the critics, any song of the chorus would only be tedious and unnecessary, because what is said, when the action is finish'd, cannot be too short.



On the CHORUS.

WE come now to an essential * part of antient tragedy peculiar to itself: whilst every other member of the building is universally admired, and industriously copied by modern architects, this alone hath been rejected and contemn'd as ungraceful and unnecessary. The chorus, as I before observed, gave the first hint to the formation of tragedy, and was as it were the corner-stone of the whole edifice: as a religious ceremony, it was consider'd by the multitude with a kind of superstitious veneration; it is not therefore improbable that the first authors of the regular drama willingly gave way to popular prejudices, and for this, among many other reasons, incorporated it into the body of the tragedy: accordingly, we find the chorus of Æschylus resuming it's original office, reciting the praises of the local deities, demi-gods and heroes, taking the part of distress'd virtue, and abounding throughout in all those moral precepts, and religious sentiments, by which the writings of the antients are so eminently and so honourably distinguish'd.

V A

* Aristotle ranks the chorus amongst what he calls, parts of quantity, and places it after the Exode.

VARIOUS are the arguments that have from time to time been produced by the zealous partizans of antiquity, in favour of the tragic chorus, the principal of which I shall briefly recapitulate and lay before my readers, begging leave at the same time to premise, that whether a chorus is defensible with regard to the antient theatre, and whether it should be adopted by the modern, are two very different questions, though generally blended and confused by writers on this subject; the former may perhaps be easily proved, though the latter be left totally undetermined. The antients thought it highly improbable that any great, interesting and important action should be perform'd without witnesses; their chorusses were therefore composed of * such persons as most naturally might be supposed present on the occasion; † persons, whose situation might so far interest them in the events of the fable, as to render their presence useful and necessary; and yet not so deeply concern'd as to make them incapable of performing that office,

b 4

* A chorus, interposing and bearing a part in the progress of the action, gives the representation that probability and striking resemblance of real life, which every man of sense perceives and feels the want of, upon our stage; a want, which nothing but such an expedient as the chorus can possibly relieve.

This is the remark of one of the most ingenious and judicious critics, which our own age, or perhaps any other ever produced; the reader will find it, with many others equally just, p. 118. of the first volume of a commentary and notes on Horace's Art of Poetry, and Epistle to Augustus.

† Thus, in the Ajax of Sophocles, the chorus is composed of the men of Salamis, his countrymen, and companions; in the Electra, of the principal ladies of Mycenæ, her friends and attendants; in the Philoctetes, of the companions of Ulysses and Neoptolemus, the only persons who could with any propriety be introduced. The rest of this writer's plays, and his only, will stand the test of examination by the rule here mentioned.

office, to which they were more particularly appointed, the giving proper advice, and making proper reflections on every thing that occur'd, in the course of the drama; for this purpose, a choriphæus or leader superintended and directed all the rest, spoke for the whole body in the dialogue part, and led the songs and dances in the intermede. By the introduction of a chorus, which bore a part in the action, the antients avoided the absurdity of monologues and soliloquies, an error, which the moderns have imperceptibly and necessarily fallen into, from their omission of it: they avoided also that miserable resource of distressed poets, the insipid and uninteresting race of confidentes (a refinement, for which we are indebted to the French theatre) who only appear to ask a foolish question, listen to the secrets of their superiors, and laugh or cry as they are commanded.

BUT the great use and advantage of the chorus will best appear, when we come to consider it in its moral capacity. In that illustrious period, which may be called the golden age of tragedy, the stage was not only the principal, but almost the only vehicle of instruction. Philosophy applied to the liberal arts for their influence and assistance; she appeared in the theatre even before she dictated in the academy, and Socrates is supposed to have delivered many of his excellent precepts, by the mouth of his * favourite poet: this sufficiently accounts for the

* Hence Euripides was called 'ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς φιλόσοφος,' the philosopher of the theatre; * in his (says Quintilian) quæ a sapientibus tradita sunt, ipsis pæne par. With regard to Socrates, his friendship with this poet is universally known, 'ἔδοκει σοφοποιεῖν Εὐριπίδῃ,' says Diogenes Laertius. The comic poets of that time did not scruple to ascribe several of Euripides's plays to Socrates,

sententious and didactic part of the antient drama; for all that profusion of moral and religious sentiments, which tires the patience and disgusts the delicacy of modern readers: the critics of those times were of opinion (however they may differ from our own in this particular) that the first and principal characters of the piece were too deeply interested in their own concerns, and too busy in the prosecution of their several designs and purposes, to be at leisure to make moral or political reflections: such, therefore, they very judiciously for the most part put into the mouth of the chorus; this, at the same time, * prevented the illiterate, and undistinguishing part of the audience, from mistaking the characters, or drawing hasty and false conclusions from the incidents and circumstances of the drama: the poet by these means leading them as it were insensibly into such sentiments and affections as he had intended to excite, and a conviction of those moral and religious truths which he meant to inculcate.

BUT the chorus had likewise another † office, which was, to relieve the spectator, during the pauses and intervals

Socrates, as they afterwards did those of Terence to Lælius and Scipio.

* Euripides being obliged to put some bold and impious sentiments into the mouth of a wicked character, the audience were angry with the poet, and looked upon him as the real villain, whom his actor represented: the story is told by Seneca. ' Now if such an audience (says the ingenious writer, whom I quoted above) could so easily misinterpret an attention to the truth of character into the real doctrine of the poet, and this too, when a chorus was at hand to correct and disabuse their judgments, what must be the case when the whole is left to the sagacity and penetration of the people?'

† The office of the chorus is divided by Aristotle into three parts,

vals of the action, by an ode or song adapted to the occasion, naturally arising from the incidents, and † connected with the subject of the drama: here the author generally gave a loose to his imagination, displayed his poetical abilities, and sometimes, perhaps too often, wandered from the scene of action into the regions of fancy; the audience notwithstanding were pleased with this short relaxation, and agreeable variety; soothed by the power of numbers and the excellency of the composition, they easily forgave the writer, and returned as it were with double attention to his prosecution of the main subject: to this part of the antient chorus we are indebted for some of the noblest flights of poetry, as well as the finest sentiments that adorn the writings of the Greek tragedians. The number of persons composing the chorus was probably at first indeterminate, varying according to the circumstances and plot of the drama. *Æschylus*, we are

parts, which he calls *παρῳδία*, *στάσιον*, and *κομμοί*; the *παρῳδία* is the first song of the chorus; the *στάσιον* is all that which the chorus sings after it has taken possession of the stage, and is incorporated into the action; and the *κομμοί* are those lamentations so frequent in the Greek writers, which the chorus and the actors make together. See the second scene of the second act of *Ajax*, in my translation; *Philoctetes*, act first, scene third; the beginning of the *Oedipus Coloneus*, together with many other parts of *Sophocles*'s tragedies, where the *κομμοί* are easily distinguishable from the regular songs of the chorus.

† -----Nen quid medios intercinat actus

Quod non proposito conducatur & hæreat apte. HOR.

This connection with the subject of the drama, so essentially necessary to a good chorus, is not always to be found in the tragedies of *Æschylus* and *Euripides*, the latter of which is greatly blamed by *Aristotle* for his carelessness in this important particular; the correct *Sophocles* alone hath strictly observed it.

are told, brought no less than fifty into his § *Eumenides*, but was obliged to reduce them to twelve; Sophocles was afterwards permitted to add three; a limitation, which we have reason to imagine became a rule to succeeding poets.

WHEN the chorus consisted of fifteen, the persons composing it ranged themselves in three rows of five each, or five rows of three; and in this order advanced or retreated from the right-hand to the left, which is called * strophe, and then back from the left to the right, which we call antistrophe; after which they stood still in the midst of the stage, and sung the epode. † Some writers attribute the original of these evolutions to a mysterious imitation of the motion of the heavens, stars, and planets, but the conjecture seems rather whimsical. The dance,

§ In the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, the chorus consisted of fifty furies, whose habits, gesture, and whole appearance was by the art of the poet rendered so formidable as to frighten the whole audience; an accident which so alarmed the public, that a decree was immediately issued to limit the number of the chorus.

* It doth not appear that the old tragedians confined themselves to any strict rules, with regard to the division of strophe, antistrophe and epode, as we find the choral songs consisting sometimes of a strophe only, sometimes of strophe and antistrophe, without the epode; the observing reader will find many other irregularities of this kind in a perusal of the Greek tragedies.

† Le Chœur (says Brumoy) alloit de droit à gauche, pour examiner le cours journalier du firmament d'orient en occident, ce tour s'appelloit strophe; il declinoit ensuite de gauche à droite, par égard aux planettes, qui outre le mouvement commun ont encore le leur particulier d'occident vers l'orient, c'étoit l'antistrophe, ou le retour; enfin le chœur s'arretoit au milieu du théâtre pour y chanter un morceau qu'on nommoit epode, & pour marquer par cette situation la stabilité de la terre.

dance, we may imagine, (if so we may venture to call it) was slow and solemn, or quick and lively, according to the words, sentiments, and occasion; and, in so spacious a theatre as that of Athens, might admit of such grace and variety in its motions as would render it extremely agreeable to the spectators: the petulancy of modern criticism has frequently made bold to ridicule the use of song and dance in antient tragedy, not considering (as Brumoy observes) that dancing is, in reality, only a more graceful way of moving, and music but a more agreeable manner of expression; nor, indeed, can any good reason be assigned why they should not be admitted, if properly introduced and carefully managed, into the most serious compositions. To say the truth, nothing is more astonishing than the prejudices we entertain, and the partiality we shew, with regard to our own modes and customs: we condemn the chorusses of the antients, which supplied with decency and propriety the vacant parts of the drama; and how do we fill up our own? To be convinced of our injustice and absurdity, let us suppose Sophocles, or Euripides, transported from the shades of elysium, and entering one of our noisy theatres, between the acts; the audience engaged in bowing or talking to each other, and the music entertaining them with a jig of Vivaldi, or the roast beef of old England, how would they be surpris'd in a few minutes to find that all this disorder, riot, and confusion, was in the midst of a most pathetic and interesting tragedy, and that the warmest passions of the human heart were broken in upon and enfeebled by this strange and unnatural interruption!

THE chorus continued on the stage during the whole representation of the piece, unless when some very extra-

† extraordinary circumstance required their absence; this obliged the poet to a continuity of action; as the chorus could not have any excuse for remaining on the spot, when the affair, which call'd them together, was at an end; it preserved also the unity of time; for if the poet, as || Hedelin observes, had comprehended in his play a week, a month, or a year, how could the spectators be made to believe that the people, who were before them, could have passed so long a time without eating, drinking, or sleeping? Thus we find that the chorus preserved all the unities of action, time, and place; that it prepared the incidents, and inculcated the moral of the piece; relieved and amused the spectators, presided over and directed the music, made a part of the decoration, and in short pervaded and animated the whole; it rendered the poem more regular, more probable, more pathetic, more noble and magnificent; it was indeed the great chain, which held together and strengthened the several parts of the drama, which without it could only have exhibited a lifeless and uninteresting scene of irregularity, darkness and confusion.

THE antient chorus notwithstanding, with all it's advantages, is not agreeable to every taste; it hath been attacked with great severity, and treated with the utmost contempt;

† As in the Ajax of Sophocles, where the chorus leave the stage in search of that hero, and by that means give him an opportunity of killing himself in the very spot, which they had quitted, and which could not have been done with any propriety whilst they were present, and able to prevent it: on these occasions, the chorus frequently divided itself into two parts, or semichorusses, and sung alternately.

|| See his whole art of the stage, page 129, of the English translation.

contempt; it hath been called arrant pedantry, an excrescency of the drama, a mob of confidants; even writers of approved genius and judgment have said, that it is absurd to imagine the antients would ever have trusted their secrets, especially those of a criminal nature, to all their domestics; that it is impossible to imagine that fifty, or even fifteen people can keep a secret, fifteen people of the same mind, thought, voice, and expression.

It must be acknowledged, that these critics have selected that part of the office of the chorus, which is most liable to censure; but even if we allow the objection its full force, it will not suffice to condemn the chorus itself, which, in the judicious Sophocles, who avoided the errors and absurdities of his cotemporaries, is unexceptionable: in that noble author, nothing is entrusted to the chorus, which ought to be conceal'd; nor any thing conceal'd, which ought to be imparted to them; we might therefore perhaps, with equal justice, banish from our own stage, the general practice of soliloquies, because Shakespear hath frequently drawn them out to an immoderate length, as utterly condemn the whole antient chorus, because Euripides hath in two or three of his plays, made an improper use of it.

Who shall decide, when doctors disagree? Some applaud the chorus with a kind of enthusiastic rapture, whilst others endeavour to sink it into universal contempt: for my own part, I cannot but think it absolutely necessary on the antient stage, and that it might be rendered useful and ornamental, even on our own. I am notwithstanding far from being of opinion, that it should be admitted constantly and indiscriminately into the modern theatre; the use of it must depend entirely on the subject: certain it is, that there are many in our own history,

history, as well as in that of other nations, where a chorus might be introduced with the utmost propriety; but if, after all, fashion and prejudice will not suffer them to appear on the stage, they may at least gain admission to the closet; thither let the reader of true taste and judgment, carry *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, written on the antient model, and compare them with any of those tinsel flimsy performances that have lately assumed the name of tragedies, which have owed all their success to the false taste of the age, join'd to the real merit of the actors in the representation of them.



On the Verse, Recitation, and Music of ANTIENT TRAGEDY.

THE art of poetry was considered by the antients as a part of that general system, which they termed the *μελοποιεα*, or melody, and was in reality the art of making verses proper to be sung: they look'd upon words, not only as signs of particular ideas, but as sounds also, enabled by the assistance of music to express all the passions of the human mind. When in the descriptive parts of the drama a dreadful or disagreeable object was to be represented, the words were formed of such harsh and jarring syllables, as by grating on the ear might best impress the exactest representation of it; and in like manner, when the grand, the beautiful, or the tender was to be set before the eyes of the spectator, the language was carefully and even painfully adapted to it. The Greeks, who were extremely solicitous to cultivate and improve their language to the highest degree of perfection, took more

more than ordinary care in the formation of their verse; the quantity of every syllable was carefully ascertain'd; different words, different dialects, and different feet, were appropriated to different species of poetry; and none infringed on the rights and privileges of another: Tragedy indeed, as the sovereign, assumed a kind of peculiar title to them all; every species of verse was occasionally introduced to adorn and beautify the drama. The iambic was generally made use of in the body of the piece, as approaching, according to the judgment of Aristotle, nearest to common discourse, and therefore most naturally adapted to the dialogue; this rule however is not constantly and invariably observed, but sometimes departed from with judgment; the metre is frequently changed, not only in the songs of the chorus, but in other places, and that generally in the most interesting and impassioned parts of the drama, where, it may here be observed, it is most probable that the music and instruments accompanying the verse were changed also; a happy circumstance for the poet, as it must have afforded an agreeable relief to the audience, who would naturally be fatigued by the repetition of the same sounds, be they ever so harmonious.

* If our own times, manners, and taste, would admit of such variations, what additional beauties would they reflect on the British theatre! but such a change of metre in serious dramatic performances is rendered absolutely impossible, as well from many other obstacles, as from the poverty

* Since the expulsion of tragedies in rhyme, of all things doubtless the most absurd, some of our best poets have introduced what is called a tag, consisting of three or four couplets, at the end of every act, to relieve the ear from the monotony of blank verse; but even this is now exploded, and we are confined to the repetition of the same continued metre, from beginning to end.

† poverty of our language, when put in comparison with those of antiquity; particularly that of Greece, whose superiority over us in this respect is so remarkably visible. On the antient stage, the length or shortness of every syllable was as it were fix'd and determined, either by nature or by use; hence the song had a necessary and agreeable conformity with common discourse, which render'd it more intelligible: our † musicians, in the composition of their songs, make short syllables long, and long short, as it suits the air, or recitative; and whilst the music pleases the ear, the words frequently offend it: if the poet and musician were always united in one person, which very seldom happens, this inconvenience might, with all the disadvantages of our language, be in a great measure lessen'd, if not entirely removed.

It is more than probable, and nearly demonstrable, that the theatrical declamation of the antients was composed and written in notes, and that the whole play, from beginning to end, (except the commoi and chorusses)

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were

† ‘ It must be confessed, (says a very judicious writer) that all the modern languages fall infinitely short of the antients in this point; both the Greek and Latin tongues assigned for the pronunciation of each syllable an exact measure of time, in some longer, in some shorter, and so variously intermixed those two different measures in the same word, as furnished means for that variety of versification, to which we are altogether strangers.’ See a book entituled, *Observations on Poetry*, printed for Doddsley in 1738, p. 108, in the chapter on versification; where the reader will meet with many sensible remarks on this subject.

† ‘ Our different cadences, (says the elegant author of *Elfrida*) our divisions, variations, repetitions, without which modern music cannot subsist, are entirely improper for the expression of poetry, and were scarce known to the antients.’

were in a kind of † recitative like our modern operas ; that it was ‡ accompanied with music throughout, and that the reciter had little else to do, than carefully to observe the directions of the poet ; the quantity of every word was ascertain'd, the time, duration, and rhythmus of every syllable fix'd by the musician, so that he could not easily mistake or offend ; the actor was not, as on our stage, left at liberty to murder fine sentiment and language by wrong accents and false pronunciation ; by hurrying over some parts with precipitancy, and drawling out others into a tedious monotony ; a good voice and a tolerable ear were all that the poet required of him.

MUSIC is rank'd by Aristotle amongst the essential parts of tragedy ; nor is there the least reason to doubt but that it was consider'd by the antients both as useful and ornamental : it was most probably diffused throughout the whole piece, accompanying the recitation in the dialogue,

† It is the opinion of P. Menestrier, and several other learned men, that the custom of chaunting in churches was originally taken from the antient stage : as the theatres were open at the commencement of the christian æra, it is not improbable, but that the common people might recite our Saviour's passion after the manner of the tragedians ; certain however it is, that in our own nation, as well as in many others, the first tragedies exhibited were on religious subjects, and in some places continue so even to this day.

‡ The *μελοποια*, or melody, is mentioned by Aristotle, as one of the six essential parts of tragedy, and consequently must have been considered by him not as confined to the chorus, but diffusing itself through the whole drama. In the 19th chapter of his problems, he asks why the tragic chorusses never sing in the hypodorian, or hypophrygian mood, which are both employed in the scenes ; from which passage, as well as many others that might be quoted, it is evident that they sung both in the scenes, or dialogue part, and in the chorus also.

dialogue, directing the voice, and even perhaps the action and gesture of the performers; varying it's movements according to the different passions to be excited in the breasts of the audience; it's different measures were always carefully § adapted to the metre, and took their names from the different feet made use of in the verse, as the dactylic, the ionic, pæonic, and the rest; the principal exertion of it's powers must, we may imagine, have been reserved for the songs, or intermedes of the chorus, where both the poetry and music admitted of much greater freedom and variety than in the other parts of the drama: thus we see, in the Antient Theatre, music always accompanied her sister science, assisted, animated, and supported her, was in short, in all respects, her friend and fellow-labourer,

Qualem decet esse sororem.

The office of a dramatic poet, in the time of antient tragedy, required, we may observe, a wider circle of knowledge, and far more extensive abilities, than the present age demands, or expects from him: for, besides all the other requisites, it was necessary that he should be master of every kind of verse, completely skill'd in music, and able to direct all the evolutions, movements, or (if so we chuse to call them) the dances of the chorus; Eu-

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ripides,

¶ In the third volume of L'Abbé du Boss's critical reflections on poetry, painting, and music; the whole eleventh chapter is employed in proving, or rather endeavouring to prove, that amongst the Romans the theatrical declamation was divided between two actors, one of whom pronounced, whilst the other executed the gesticulation.---I refer my readers to the book itself, where they will find many ingenious remarks on the theatrical representations of the antients.

§ St. Austin has written a treatise, expressly to reconcile the various measures of antient verse with the principles of music.

ripides, we are told, instructed his singers in the grave and solemn airs, which accompanied all his pieces; and Plutarch informs us, that the people of Susæ, and the Persians, by the command of Alexander, sung the tragedies of Sophocles, and his successors in the drama, according to the measures which those writers had themselves prescribed at the first representation of them.

TRAGEDY was in it's infancy, what Aristotle calls it, * made up of music and dancing; and the old tragedians, Thespis, Pratinus, Cratinus, and Phrynicus, according to Athenæus, bore the name of † dancers, because they used so much dancing in their chorusses! Tetrameters were therefore for a long time made use of in the verse, as that foot was most proper for motion, though it was afterwards changed to the iambic; when the dance or ‡ movement was confined to the songs or intermedes of the chorus, which in the more perfect state of tragedy became, as I before observed, but a small part of the whole drama. What instruments the antients made use of in their theatrical music, and in what it's principal merit consisted, it is perhaps at this distance of time not easy to determine; if any of my readers are desirous of prying into a subject so dark and intricate, I must refer them to Plutarch's dialogue on this subject, together with Monsieur Burette's observations on it in the tenth volume of the hist. de l'Acad. to which may be added P. Menestrier's differ-

* Ορχησικώτερα.

† Ορχηστικοί.

‡ This movement was probably (as an excellent critic observes) becoming, graceful and majestic, as appears from the name usually given it, *εὐμελεια*, 'this word (says he) cannot well be translated into our language, but expresses all that grace and concinnity of motion which the dignity of the choral song required.'

See notes on the art of poetry, v. 1. p. 151.

dissertation on antient and modern music, where they will meet with as much information as I believe can be given them on this head.

THE use of music in tragedy hath been matter of much doubt and contention with modern critics; M. Dacier thinks it by no means essential, and greatly condemns Aristotle for his approbation of it; it is notwithstanding indisputable, that on the antient stage, music was a most beautiful adjunct to poetry, and contributed in a great measure to the high finishing and perfection of the Greek drama; we cannot perhaps so easily resolve, how far it may be reconcileable to modern manners, though from some late experiments on § one of our theatres, we have reason to think that, when introduced with propriety, it might be attended with it's desired effect.



On the Construction of the Greek Theatre.

THE GREEK THEATRE is amongst those superb monuments of antient taste, genius and magnificence, which would probably have survived the depredations, even of time itself, if ignorance and barbarism had not conspired to ruin and destroy it: of all those noble and costly structures which Athens, and Sparta dedicated to the muses, we have now scarce any thing but a few inconsiderable remains, sufficiently striking to raise our curiosity, but at the same time too mutilated and

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imperfect

§ In the representation of Merope, the solemnity of the sacrifice scene is greatly heightened by the music and song; the judicious manager of Drury-lane theatre has introduced it into several other tragedies with success.

imperfect to satisfy it. Those writers of antiquity, who have occasionally mention'd the construction of the theatre, as they treated a subject universally known by their cotemporaries, did not think themselves obliged to handle it with that degree of accuracy and precision, which were so necessary for the information of posterity; in consequence of which, they frequently gave names to one part of the building that more properly belong'd to another, and by a confusion of terms, which could not mislead the readers of their own times, involved their successors in a labyrinth of error and obscurity; add to this, that the same fate hath attended the description of the building, which had before happen'd to the several constituent parts of the drama; modern critics too often confound together the Greek and Roman theatre (though they differ most essentially in many parts) we find terms frequently appropriated to one, which belong only to the other; and the whole so imperfectly delineated, by almost every one of them, as to render it throughout a matter of doubt and uncertainty. Some lights however have from time to time been thrown on this dark and intricate subject, whose scatter'd rays, when united and drawn to a point, will exhibit to us the following tolerably accurate, though still imperfect representation of it.

THE ANTIEN T GREEK THEATRE,
in it's highest state of perfection, was a most spacious,
noble, and magnificent structure, built with the most +
solid

§ The theatre at Athens was originally built with wood, but being one day remarkably crowded on the exhibition of a tragedy, written by Pratinas, the benches fell in, many of the spectators were killed, and the whole fabric buried in ruins: this melancholy accident induced the Athenians, naturally fond of spectacles, to set about

solid and durable materials, and capable, we are told, of holding thirty thousand spectators: to give my readers a proper idea of it's form, I shall divide it into three principal departments; one for the actors, which they call'd the scene; another for the spectators, under the general denomination of the theatre; and a third call'd the orchestra, allotted to the music, mimes, and dancers. To determine the situation of these three parts, and consequently the disposition of the whole, it is necessary to observe, that the plan (here annex'd) consists on one side of two semi-circles, drawn from the same centre, but of different diameters; and on the other, of a square of the same length, but less by one half; the space between the two semi-circles, was allotted for the spectators; the square at the end, to the actors; and the intervening area in the middle, to the orchestra. Thus we see, the theatre was circular on one side, and square on the other; round the whole were ranges of porticos, (see letters A and B) more or less, according to the number of stories, the most magnificent theatres always having three, one raised above another; to these porticos, which might properly be said to form the body of the edifice, the women were admitted, being the only places cover'd from rain and heat; the rest were intirely * open above, and all the representations in the † day-time.

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about the construction of those superb edifices, which they afterwards made use of, built with the most costly marble, and adorned with every thing that could render them solid, noble, splendid, and magnificent.

* The amphitheatres in Spain were formerly built something in this manner, having no roof, so that the spectators were often exposed to rain, heat, and all the inclemency of the seasons.

† In many cities of the two Lombardies (as Riccoboni informs us)

THE seats for the spectators (letter I) extended from the upper portico, down quite to the orchestra, (letter H) differing in their width and number with the size of the theatre, and were always so form'd, that a line drawn from the top to the bottom, would touch the extremities of every one of them; between each story was a wide passage leading to the seats, every one of which, for the better accommodation of the audience, was at such a distance from the seat placed over it, that the feet of the persons above could not touch those who were below.

THE magistrates were separated from the populace by a place appropriated to them call'd Βουλευτικός; the Εφηβικός, or seat of the youths, was assign'd to the young men of quality and distinction; there were also some προσδριαί, or first seats, allotted to persons of extraordinary merit, where all those were placed, who had distinguish'd themselves by any signal services to the common-wealth; such in process of time became hereditary, and were appointed for particular families; all these were very near to, or sometimes in the orchestra, and as close as the structure of the theatre would admit, to the scene, or place of representation.

THE orchestra, being between the two parts of the building, one of which was circular, and the other square, partook of the shape of both, varying in it's size according to that of the theatre, though it's width was always double it's

us) the spring of the year is allotted for comedies, which are represented in the day-time without any lights, the play-houses being built in such a manner as to be sufficiently enlightened by the sun: and, in the year 1609, a regulation was made in France, by the civil magistrate, by which the players were ordered to open their doors at one o'clock, to begin the entertainment at two, and to put an end to it at half an hour after four.

it's length; and that width always the semi-diameter of the whole edifice; to this they enter'd by passages under the seats of the spectators, the whole being intirely on a level with the ground; this led also to the stair-cases; (letter K) by || which they ascended to the different stories of the theatre, some leading to the seats, others to the porticos, of course turn'd different ways, but all equally wide, disengaged from each other, and so commodious as to give sufficient room for the spectators to go in and out without the least crowding or inconvenience.

BETWEEN the orchestra and the stage was the *υποσκηνιον*, hyposcenium (letter E) so call'd, because it was close to the scene or place of representation: here, it is most probable, were placed the instruments that accompanied the actors throughout the drama.

§ BEYOND this was the large and vacant space call'd *προσκηνιον*, proscenium, or *ωρυειον* (letter D) representing the

† In the Roman theatre, the senators and chief magistrates frequently sat in the orchestra, where finding the inconveniency of the level, it was remedied by raising the seats a little above each other.

|| Mons. Boindin reckons up very accurately the number of the stair-cases, and of the seats, together with many other minute particulars; what I have extracted from him may suffice to give the reader a general idea of the whole structure; if the curious in architecture are desirous of farther information, I must refer them to the discourse itself, which they will find in the first volume of the *hist de l'acad.* quarto edition, p. 136.

§ Between this part and the proscenium, Mr. Boindin places the Greek *θυμειν*, or thymele (letter F) so called because in shape it resembled an altar: here, he imagines, the chorus was placed, and performed their songs and dances: but this place, with all due deference to that ingenious critic, could by no means be allotted to the chorus, being much too distant from the stage, where, we know from

the scene of action, which was always some public place, as a road, a grove, a court-yard, adjoining to some temple or palace; the length and breadth of this area or stage varied according to the size of the theatre, but was always of the same heighth, and in the Greek theatre never more or less than ten foot.

At the extremity of the whole building, was the *παράσκημιον*, or post-scenium (letter G) that place behind the scenes, where the actors dress'd themselves, and prepared the habits, scenes, machines, and every thing necessary to the representation.

At the back of the stage (letter L) were the triangular machines for the scenery, call'd by the Greeks * *περιακτοι*, which as they turn'd on their own axis, might be shifted on any occasion, and exhibited three different views or changes of scene; these were not made use of in tragedy, which required but one scene throughout, but most probably at the end of it, to prepare the exhibition of the comedy or mime, which in the antient theatre frequently succeeded

from the tragedies themselves, the chorus must always be, as, besides the songs or intermedes, it bears a part in the dialogue throughout the piece, and consequently must stand close to the other actors.

* Utrunque alia interdum portæ quarum in postibus affixæ machinæ *περιακτοι* dictæ, quæ pro re ac tempore circumagebantur. Suid. To these Virgil is supposed to allude in the third book of the Georgics.

Vel scena ut versis discedat frontibus-----

Which is thus explained by Servius. 'Scena, (says he) quæ fiebat aut versilis aut ductilis; versilis tunc erat cum subito tota machinis convertebatur, & aliam picturæ faciem ostendebat; ductilis tunc cum tractis tabulatis hæc atque illæ species picturæ nudabatur interior.' What Virgil mentions, was probably an improvement on the *περιακτοι*, as practised in the Roman theatre.

succeeded each other, perhaps two or three times on the same day.

AMONGST the many peculiarities of the Greek theatre, with regard to it's construction, there is not perhaps any thing so remarkable, and which we can so difficultly form any idea of, as the *echœa*, or brazen vessels, which, according to † Vitruvius, were made use of by the Greeks, to render the articulation distinct, and give a more extensive pow'r to the voice, an expedient doubtless extremely necessary in so large a theatre; for this purpose we are told, that they had recourse to several round concave plates of brass, placed under the seats of the spectators, so disposed and contrived by the most exact geometrical and harmonic proportions as to reverberate the voice, and carry the words of the actor to the farthest part of the building; the manner in which this was perform'd is, I must confess, to me utterly incomprehensible; certain it is, that no idea can be form'd of it without the most profound knowledge of antient music, and antient architecture: I shall not therefore trouble my readers with an explication of what few I believe would be able to comprehend; but if any of them are desirous of a more intimate acquaintance with these Brazen Echos, I must refer them to the sixth book of the learned Vitruvius, and Monsieur Burette's treatise on antient music.

On

† *Vasa ærea*, (says Vitruvius) quæ in cellis sub gradibus mathematica ratione collocantur, ad symphonias musicas, sive concentus, ita componuntur uti vox scenici sonitus conveniens in dispositionibus tactu cum offenderit, aucta cum incremento clarior ac suavior ad spectatorum perveniat aures.

To these *echœa* it is supposed, Cassiodorus alludes, where he says, ‘tragædia, concavis repercussionibus roborata, talem sonum videtur efficere, ut pæne ab homine non credatur.’

Cass. ep. 51, lib. 1.

On the Scenes, Machines and Decorations.

THOUGH we have no genuine or regular account now extant of the machines and decorations of the Greek theatre, we have sufficient reason to conclude from the tragedies themselves still remaining, that such things were made use of in the representation; as we find in almost every one of them gods ascending and descending, ghosts and furies frequently appearing on the stage, with divinities celestial and terrestrial; for all these, we need not doubt but that the antients had machines of various kinds, according to the various exigences and circumstances that required them; and, as we learn from the scatter'd remains of Hesychius, Pollux, and other writers, were no strangers to † trap-doors, flying chariots, magnificent arches, flights, ropes, pullies, and in short all the mechanical apparatus of the stage. As to the scenery, we know that the strict regard paid by the Greek tragedians to the unity of place confined the whole representation of their pieces to one particular spot; this however we find was sumptuously adorn'd with all the embellishments, which art or nature could furnish; magnificent || columns, porticos, statues, paintings, basso-relievos, every thing, which the elegant taste and genius of Greece could produce, was added to enrich the scene; even so early as in the
time

† Scenæ tragicæ (says Vitruvius) deformantur columnis, fastigiis, & signis, reliquisque regalibus rebus.

|| *Αναρτισματα*, sunt rudentes scenici quibus per tractoria organa latentes personæ sustollebantur in scenam. *Κερημα*, rudentes qui ex alto suspensi sunt ut sustineant eos qui ære ferri videntur.

Pollux.

time of *Æschylus*, we are § told that the decorations of the theatre were made according to the *exactest* rules of perspective. The whole theatre (porticos excepted) being, as I before observed, uncover'd, and consequently exposed to the heat of the sun, and inclemency of the weather; a kind of thin curtain, fasten'd probably to a large pillar or pole in the centre of the building, was extended over the whole; as the heat notwithstanding (which is always the case in our modern tents) frequently penetrated through them, and the breaths of so numerous an assembly must have been offensive, they had recourse to artificial showers of rain, which they convey'd from the top of the porticos through the statues that were dispersed over the different parts of the building; * *Mr. Boindin* adds, that the water on these occasions was always scented, so that the spectators were not only refresh'd by this gentle dew falling upon them, but at the same time regaled with the most exquisite perfume.

On

§ Tum *Athenis*, *Agatarchus*, *Æschylo* docente, tragediam primus scenam fecit, & de eo commentarium reliquit, ex quo moniti *Democritus* & *Anaxagoras* de eadem re scripserunt, quemadmodum oporteat ad aciem oculorum, radiorumque extensionem, centro constituto ad lineas ratione naturali respondere; uti de re incertâ certæ imagines ædificiorum in scenarum picturis redderent speciem, & quæ in directis planisque frontibus sint figurata, alia absidentia, alia prominentia esse videantur. *Vitruvius*, lib. viii.

* As I do not remember that we have any authority from ancient Greek writers for this anecdote, I should rather be inclined to consider the perfumed water as a refinement of modern luxury, and ascribe it to the improvements of the Roman theatre.

On the MASQUES.

IT appears from the united testimonies of several ancient writers, that the actors of Greece never appeared on the stage in tragedy, or any other species of the drama without masques: it is most probable, that before the time of Æschylus, to whom || Horace ascribes this invention, they disguised their features either, as in the days of Thespis, by daubing them with the lees of wine, or by painting, false hair, and other artifices of the same kind with those, which are practised in the modern theatre: masques however were soon introduced, and looked on, we may imagine, in those days as a most ingenious device; that, which they made use of in tragedy, was, according to the best information we can gather concerning it, a kind of casque or helmet, which covered the whole head, representing not only the face, but the beard, hair, ears, and even in the women's masques, all the ornaments of the coif, or cap, being made of § different materials, according to the several improvements, which it received from time to time; the most perfect and durable

|| Suidas and Athenæus attribute the invention of masques to the poet Chœrilus. Horace gives the honour to Æschylus; but Aristotle, who we may suppose was as well acquainted with this matter as any of them, fairly acknowledges himself entirely ignorant of it.

‘ *Τὴς δὲ προσωπᾶς, (says he) ἀπεδωκε, ὡς γινέται.*’

§ The first masques were made of the leaves of a plant, to which the Greeks on this account gave the name of *προσωπίον*, ‘quidam’ (says Pliny) *Arcion personatam vocant, cujus folio nullum est* ‘latius.’ Virgil mentions them as composed of the barks of trees.

Oraque corticibus sumunt horrenda cavatis,
And Pollux tells us, that they were made of leather, lined with cloth or stuff, *ἐνδότεν δ’ ὀδονίον, ἐξωτέν δὲ σκυτινίον προσωπόν.*

able were of wood, executed with the greatest care, by sculptors of the first rank and eminence, who received their directions from the poet. It seems to have been an established opinion amongst the antients, that their heroes and demi-gods, who were generally the subject of their tragedies, were of an extraordinary size, far surpassing that of common mortals; we must not be surprised therefore to find their tragic poets, in compliance with this popular prejudice, raising them upon * the cothurnus, swelling them to an immense magnitude, and by the assistance of a † large and frightful masque, endeavouring to fill the minds of the spectators with a religious awe, and veneration of them: the tragique masques were generally copied from the busts or statues of the principal personages, and consequently conveyed the most exact idea and resemblance of them, which must have given an air of probability to the whole: those, which

repre-

* The cothurnus, or buskin, was a kind of large and high shoe, the sole of which, being made of very thick wood, raised the actors to an extraordinary size; Juvenal tells us, that it made them appear extremely tall, and compares an actress without her cothurnus to a pygmy.

-----breviorque videtur
Virgine pygmææ nullis adjuta cothurnis.

The cothurnus was probably of the same form as the high shoe, or piece of cork, bound about with tin or silver, worn by the Spanish women, called a chioppine, and which, it should seem by a passage in Shakspear, was used on our own stage. 'Your ladyship
' is nearer heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a
' chioppine.'

Hamlet, act 2, scene 7.

† The tragic masques had large and expanded mouths, as if (says the humorous Lucian) they were about to devour the spectators,
ως καταπιεμενος της δεστας.

represented † ghosts and furies, were made still more terrible and frightful ; but the masques of the || dancers, or persons, who formed the body of the chorus, had nothing disagreeable.

As in the infancy of tragedy there were probably but few actors, the use of masques gave each of them an opportunity of playing several parts, wherein the character, age, and sex were different, without being discovered ; the large opening of the mouth was so contrived as to increase the sound of the voice, and send it to the farthest part of the theatre, which was so extremely large and spacious, that without some such assistance we cannot easily conceive how the actor could be well heard or seen ; in all theatrical painting, scenery and decoration, the objects, we know, must be magnified beyond the life and reality, to produce their proper effect ; and, in the same manner, we may imagine that, in so extensive an area as the Greek theatre, it might be necessary to exaggerate the features, and enlarge the form of the actor ; add to this, that at such a distance as most of the spectators were, the natural expression of the eyes and countenance must be entirely lost. The sanguine admirers of every thing that is antient bring many more arguments to defend the tragic § masque ; but after all that can be said in its favour, it

† The masque commonly used, was called simply *προσωπειον* ; the others, *μορμολυκειον*, and *γοργονειον*.

|| *Τὸ δὲ ὀρχηστῆς σχῆμα* (says Lucian) *κοσμίον καὶ εὐπρεπές.*
 * *Τὸ δὲ πρόσωπον αὐτὸ καλῶσι, τῷ υποκειμένῳ δράματι εἰσικός, ὡς κέκηνος, ἀλλὰ συμμεμνῆκος.*

§ Masques have had their admirers in modern as well as in antient times, and been used on more stages than that of Greece : even towards the middle of the last century, the actors both in tragedy

it is perhaps scarce defensible; the face is certainly the best index of the mind, and the passions are as forcibly express'd by the features, as by the words and gesture of the performer: the Greeks in this, as in many other particulars, sacrificed propriety, truth and reason, to magnificence and vanity.

ALL the expences of the theatre were defrayed by the state, and were indeed so considerable, that nothing but the purse of an opulent republic could possibly have supported them, as it is confidently affirmed by * historians that Athens spent more in dramatic representations than in all her wars.



Of the Time when TRAGEDY flourished in Greece.

IT was not my design in this short Dissertation (nor could indeed be comprehended within the limits of it) to point out with Aristotle what tragedy ought to be, but simply

gedy and comedy on the French theatre wore masques. The English is doubtless in this respect, as well as in many others, infinitely superior to the Athenian stage; notwithstanding which, I will promise to join the *προσωποποιῶντες*, and vote for the restoration of the antient masque, whenever they will shew me one that can represent the happy features of Quin, in the character of Falstaff, or give us an idea of a frantic Lear, like the look and face of the imitable Garrick.

* This assertion which seems rather hyperbolic, is notwithstanding supported by the grave Plutarch, who, speaking of the Athenians, assures us, that the representation of the *Bacchantes*, *Phœnix*, *Oedipus*, *Antigone*, *Medea*, and *Electra*, cost them more money than the defence of their own liberties in the field, or all their contest with the Barbarians.

simply to shew what it was during the lives of the great triumvirate, as far as we can judge from the remains now extant; in my account of its several parts therefore I have not followed the steps of the great critic, but principally confined myself to those particulars, which distinguish the antient from the modern drama, and which may best enable us to form a proper and adequate idea of the Greek tragedy; but even the most perfect knowledge of all the essential and constituent parts will be found insufficient for this purpose, unless we take into our view also the time when, and the very spot where every piece was exhibited. Dramatic, as well as every other species of poetry, is best known and distinguished by the place of its birth; it will take it's form, colour, and complection from it's native soil, as naturally as water derives it's taste and qualities from the different kinds of earth, through which it flows: it is absolutely necessary therefore, before we can judge impartially of the Greek tragedies, to transport ourselves to the scene where they were represented, to shake off the Englishman for a time, and put on the Athenian.

It has been with great truth remarked, that there is allotted to every nation upon earth a particular period, which may be called their zenith of perfection, to which they approach by slow degrees, and from which, they gradually and insensibly recede: in this happy age of power and prosperity, the arts and sciences, taste, genius, and literature have always shone with distinguish'd lustre: such was the time when Athens gave laws to all Greece, whilst the glorious victories of Marathon and Salamis animated every tongue with eloquence, and filled every breast with exultation; that haughty and successful people maintained for a long time her sovereignty over the neighbouring nations; her councils were influenced by prudence,

dence, and her battles crowned with conquest; the treasure, which she had seized in the temple of Delphos, enabled her not only to carry on her wars with success, but left her a plentiful reserve also to supply her luxuries: this was the age of heroes, philosophers and poets; when architecture, painting, and sculpture, foster'd by the genial warmth of power and protection, so conspicuously displayed their several beauties, and produced all those superb monuments of antient taste and genius, which united to distinguish this illustrious æra: during this happy period, tragedy appeared in her meridian splendor, when the great triumvirate exhibited before the most polite and refined nation then upon earth those excellent pieces, which extorted applause, honours and rewards, from their cotemporaries, and ensured to them the deserved admiration of all posterity: it may indeed with great truth be asserted, that the same remarkable love of order and simplicity, the same justness of symmetry and proportion, the same elegance, truth and sublimity, which appeared in the buildings, pictures and statues of that age, are conspicuous also in the antient drama.

IN the time of the Greek tragedy, the Athenians dictated as it were to all mankind: proud by nature, and elated by riches and prosperity, they looked down with the utmost contempt on the neighbouring nations, whom they stiled and treated as barbarians; as a republic, the avowed enemies of monarchy and dependence; as a free people, bold and impatient of restraint or contradiction; strongly attached to their own laws and customs; lively and active, but inconstant and superstitious: their manners plain and simple, but their taste at the same time elegant and refined. As the theatre was supported entirely at the expence of the public, the public directed all it's

operations ; we might naturally expect therefore, that the poet would for his own sake take care to adapt his compositions to the public taste ; to fall in with national prejudices and superstitions ; to sooth the pride, flatter the self-love, and adopt the opinions of his fellow-citizens : we must not wonder to hear, as we constantly do, (in the tragedies that remain) the praises of Athens perpetually resounded, the superiority of her laws and constitution extolled, and her form of government preferred to every other ; oblique hints, or direct accusations of folly and weakness in her enemies ; public facts frequently alluded to, and public events recorded ; their own festivals, sacrifices, * religious rites, and ceremonies, carefully and accurately described ; Sparta and Thebes, as rival states, occasionally satyrized and condemned ; and above all, every opportunity taken to point out the evils of monarchy, and engrave their favourite democratical principles on the hearts of the people : it is not improbable but that many of those moral sentences, and political apothegms, which at this distance of time appear cold and insipid to us, had, besides their general tendency, some double meaning, some allusion to particular facts and circumstances, which gave them an additional lustre : without this key to the Greek theatre, it is impossible to form a right idea of antient tragedy, which was not, like our own, mere matter of amusement, but the channel of public instruction, and the instrument of public policy ; those readers therefore, who are utterly unacquainted with the religion, laws, and customs of Athens, are by

* See, amongst many other instances, the noble description of the Pythian games, in the second act of *Electra*, v. 1. p. 137. of my translation of Sophocles, and the sacred grove of the Eumenides, in the *OEdipus Coloneus*, v. 2. p. 292.

no means adequate judges of it; they only * condemn, for the most part, what they do not understand, and rashly judge of the whole edifice, whilst they view but an inconsiderable part of the building. But so warmly are we attached to what lies before us, and so prejudiced in favour of those modes and customs, which are established amongst ourselves, that we generally rate the merit of past performances by the standard and rule of present practice; the antients therefore are subject to the disadvantage of being tried, not, as justice demands, by their laws, but by our own.

AND here it is worthy of our observation to remark, that the Greek tragedy seems, in it's whole progress, to have kept pace with the place of it's birth, and to have flourished and declined with it's native country: the rise of Athens, from meanness and obscurity to power and splendor, may be dated from the battle of Marathon, which laid the foundation of all her future glory; soon after which, we find Æschylus forming his plan of antient tragedy; after him arose the immortal Sophocles, who improved upon, and greatly exceeded his illustrious master; to these succeeded Euripides, born ten years after the battle of Marathon, and on the very day of the sea-fight at Salamis: whilst these illustrious writers flourished, Athens flourished also, for above half a century: Euripides was fifty years of age, when the Peloponnesian war began; from which period the superiority of Athens visibly declined, and was soon entirely destroyed by the rival power of Sparta, in confederacy with the Persian monarch. Sophocles, happy in not surviving the honour and liberty of his country, expired one year before the

d 3

taking

* *Damnant quod non intelligunt.*

Quintilian.

taking of Athens by Lyſander, when the ſovereignty of Greece devolved to the Lacedæmonians.



Of the three great TRAGEDIANS.

ÆSCHYLUS was born at Athens, in the first year of the * fixtieth olympiad: he embraced very early in life the profession of † arms, and distinguished himself as an officer at the famous battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Platæa: the perpetual scenes of slaughter and bloodshed, in which he was during a long series of years unavoidably engaged, seem to have tinged his imagination with that portion of the fierce and terrible so distinguishable in all his pieces: during the intervals of his military occupation, he found time to write no less than seventy, or according to some historians, ninety tragedies, only seven of which are now extant: when he was pretty far advanced in years, he lost the poetical prize to Sophocles, then but a boy, or, as other writers with more probability assert, to Simonides, in an elegy on the heroes, who fell at Marathon; a circumstance, which so deeply affected him, that he immediately withdrew from Athens, and retired to the court of Hiero, king of Sicily, a friend of the muses, whose palace was a kind of asylum for the discontented poets of Greece; there, we are told, he lived in great affluence and splendor, to the age of sixty-five; the writers of his life, not willing to admit that so great

* Five hundred and forty years before Christ.

† He had two brothers, who were likewise in the army, Cyne-girus and Aminias: at the battle of Salamis, the former lost his life, the latter one of his arms.

great a poet could die a common death, have thought proper to dignify his last moments with a circumstance, which carries with it more of the marvellous than the probable : an oracle had, it seems, declared (for oracles were always ready on these occasions) that *Æschylus* should fall by the hand of heaven ; accordingly, that this might be fulfilled, it is reported that an eagle was seen in the air, holding in her talons a tortoise, which (unfortunately for the bard) she let go, and dropping on the head *Æschylus*, who happened to be walking beneath, fractured his skull : he is said to have gained thirteen victories over his rival poets, which one would think was an ample recompence for the single failure that gave him so much uneasiness. His tragedies were greatly admired during his life, and after his death held in the highest esteem, insomuch that a decree was passed by the senate, declaring, that if any person would exhibit the tragedies of *Æschylus*, the state would bear the charges of the chorus, and defray the whole expence of the representation ; an honour, which probably had not been bestowed on any poet before his time, though afterwards, as I observed above, they were generally play'd at the public cost.

ÆSCHYLUS is a bold, nervous, animated writer : his imagination fertile, but licentious ; his judgment true, but ungoverned ; his genius lively, but uncultivated ; his sentiments noble and sublime, but at the same time wild, irregular, and frequently fantastical ; his plots, for the most part, rude and inartificial ; his scenes unconnected, and ill-placed ; his language generally poignant and expressive, though in many places turgid and obscure, and even too often degenerating into rustian and bombast ; his characters strongly marked, but all partaking of that

wild fierceness, which is the characteristic of their author; his peculiar excellency was in raising terror and astonishment, in warm and descriptive scenes of war and slaughter: if we consider the state of the drama when he undertook to reform and improve it, we shall behold him with admiration; if we compare him with his two illustrious successors, he hides his diminished head, and appears far less conspicuous: were we to draw a parallel between dramatic poetry and painting, we should perhaps stile him the Julio Romano of antient tragedy.

SOPHOCLES was born at Colonè, a burgh or village in Attica; his father Sophilus was, as some writers tell us, a * blacksmith; or, according to a more favourable heraldry, master of a forge: as the profession of arms was at that time more honourable, and probably more advantageous than any other, Sophocles entered into it, and followed the steps of his master Æschylus, both as a soldier and a poet; in the former capacity he had the honour to serve under the great † Pericles. As a dramatic writer, he was early distinguished for his extraordinary abilities, which first placed him on a level, and afterwards raised him to a superiority over his illustrious rival; he is supposed to have written one hundred and twenty tragedies, only seven of which are now remaining; these were received by his cotemporaries with the applause they so highly

* Much ink has been shed by the commentators on this subject, both with regard to Sophocles and Demosthenes also, who was, it seems, in the same predicament, it not being determined whether his father was a Vulcan or a common cyclop.

† Pericles, if we may believe Athenæus, used to say that Sophocles was a good soldier; but a bad officer; a circumstance, which, if he had not succeeded better as a poet, it is probable would never have reach'd posterity.

highly deserved : it is remarked, that he never acted himself in any of his plays, as *Æschylus* and *Euripides* did, his voice being too weak and low for the stage; though he was always present at the representation, and received the applauses of the audience, who, we are told, seldom failed to signify their approbation by a loud and general clap, both at his entrance into, and leaving the theatre: he was crowned twenty times, and though he probably sometimes shared the fate of his brother poets by unjust censure, could never be prevailed on, as his rivals were, to leave his native country, to which he took * every opportunity of shewing his sincerest attachment: with regard to his death, historians (if scholiasts and commentators may be so called) have indulged themselves in the same liberty which they took with his predecessor *Æschylus*; some kill him with a grape-stone; others tell us, that he died with joy at being crowned for one of his tragedies; whilst a third set gravely assure us, that having one day an inclination to play a part in his own *Antigone*, he dipped into a speech too long for his weak lungs, and expired, merely for want of a better breath, in the midst of it.

AFTER all, as *Sophocles*, according to various testimonies, lived till ninety, it is not improbable that he might have died of † extreme old age, a distemper, which
is

* It is with great reason imagined, that *Sophocles* laid the scene of his latter *OEdipus* in *Colone*, with a purposed design of doing honour to the place of his nativity.

† The story of his sons ingratitude, told by *Plutarch* and others, is omitted here, because my readers will find it related in my notes on the translation of the *OEdipus Coloneus*. See v. 2, p. 239.

Sophocles had several children, one of which, whose name was *Iophon*,

is seldom perhaps more favourable to poets than to other men: the Athenians erected a sumptuous monument in memory of him, on which was engraved a swarm of † bees, in allusion to the name generally given him on account of his verses, which are indeed, wonderfully soft and harmonious, or, as a nobler poet even than Sophocles himself expresses it, sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb.

SOPHOCLES may with great truth be call'd, the prince of antient dramatic poets; his fables, at least of all those tragedies now extant, are interesting and well-chosen, his plots regular and well-conducted, his sentiments elegant, noble and sublime, his incidents natural, his diction simple, his manners and characters striking, equal and unexceptionable, his chorusses well adapted to the subject, his moral reflections pertinent and useful, and his numbers in every part to the last degree sweet and harmonious; the warmth of his imagination is so temper'd by the perfection of his judgment, that his spirit however animated never wanders into licentiousness, whilst at the same time the fire of his genius seldom suffers the most uninteresting parts of his tragedy to sink into coldness and insipidity; his peculiar excellence seems to lye in the *
descrip-

Iophon, is said to have inherited the dramatic genius of his father, and to have written four tragedies, the names only of which are come down to us, viz. Ilium, Achilles, Telephus, and Aëteon.

† Sophocles was universally siled, the Bee. Some commentators have taken the bees from off his tomb, and hived them in his cradle, assuring us, that when Sophocles was an infant, a swarm of them was seen to alight upon his lips, which was at that time looked on as a presage of his future eloquence.

* For a proof of this, I would refer my readers to his fine description

descriptive; and, exclusive of his dramatic powers, he is certainly a greater poet than either of his illustrious rivals: were I to draw a similitude of him, as I did of Æschylus, from painting, I should say that his ordonnance was so just, his figures so well group'd and contrasted, his colours so glowing and natural, all his pieces in short executed in so bold and masterly a style, as to wrest the palm from every other hand, and point him out as the Raphael of the antient drama.

EURIPIDES, the son of Mnesarchus and Clito, was a native of Salamis, to which place his parents had withdrawn to shelter themselves from the storm of war with which Greece was threaten'd by the invasion of Xerxes; he was born in the second year of the * seventy-fifth olympiad, in the midst of all the triumphal pomp, which follow'd the famous victories of Salamis and Platea: as the genius of Euripides was not turn'd like that of his two predecessors towards a military life, he attach'd himself to philosophy, at that time the fashionable taste and study of all Greece, under the celebrated † Anaxagoras; but partly perhaps from the fear of incurring his master's fate, and partly from the natural bent of his own mind, soon left the perplexing paths of science, and gave himself

description of the Pythian games in the *Electra*; the distress of *Philoctetes* in *Lemnos*; and the praises of Athens in the *Oedipus Coloneus*.

* Four hundred seventy five years before Christ.

† Anaxagoras, amongst many other new opinions advanced by him, had asserted that the sun was a globe of fire, which gave so much offence to the ignorance and superstition of his countrymen, that he was forced to submit to a voluntary exile, as the only means of saving his life, which would otherwise have fallen a sacrifice to the enraged multitude.

self up to the more inviting charms of poetry: as the stage was probably then, as it is now, far the most lucrative branch of it, he applied himself early to the writing of tragedies, in which he succeeded so well, as to enter the lists with Æschylus and Sophocles: the immortal Socrates, to whom we may suppose he was in a great measure indebted for the applause and encouragement bestow'd on him, not only honour'd him with his patronage and protection, but enter'd into the most intimate friendship and connection with him; he is even said to have assisted him in several of his plays; the moral and philosophic air, which runs through them all, seems indeed greatly to favour this opinion, which was industriously propagated by his * enemies, to obscure if possible the lustre of such conspicuous merit; he gain'd † five victories, and is supposed to have written seventy-five tragedies, only nineteen of which are now extant; some ‡ letters of Euripides, handed down to us, take notice of a quarrel between him and Sophocles, and give an account also of their perfect reconciliation; though his tragedies were for the most part well received by his cotemporaries, we may imagine that, like other poets, he met with some ill treatment from them, as we find him in the latter part of his life at the court of Archelaus, king of Macedon, who loaded him

* Diogenes Laërtius, speaking of Socrates, says, *ἐδούκον σὺν τοῖσι Εὐριπίδῃ*. Mnesilochus told the Athenians, that Euripides was only a hammer-man to Socrates, and calls him *Εὐριπίδης Σωκρατογομῆς*; the comic poets frequently reproach him for his obligations to the philosopher.

† Some commentators correct the text of A. Gellius, and make it fifteen.

‡ The English reader may find these letters at the end of my translation of the Epistles of Phalaris, published in 1749.

him with favours, and treated him with all the respect due to his character and abilities; there, we are told, he lived in great affluence and splendor about three years, when unfortunately wandering one day into a solitary place, he was set on by a pack of hounds, and † torn to pieces, at the age of seventy-five. Aulus Gellius informs us, that the Athenians sent to Macedon for his body, and had prepared to grace it with a pompous and splendid funeral, but the Macedonians refusing to deliver it, they contented themselves with erecting a magnificent tomb to his memory, and gravating his name and honours on the empty marble; a copy of his works was carefully deposited amongst the archives, and so highly esteem'd, that a king of Ægypt in vain for a long time solicited a copy of them, which the Athenians positively refused, till a famine happening in Greece, the king in return refused to sell them corn; necessity at last prevailing, they parted with the manuscript, and the king acknowledged so singular a favour, by permitting the merchants of Athens to take away as much corn as they wanted, without paying the usual tribute.

In such high esteem were the works of this poet, that many noble Athenians being taken prisoners at * Syracuse,

† One of his biographers acquaints us, that the dogs were planted there on purpose, and set on by a brother bard, grown jealous of his rising reputation, who took this opportunity to dispatch him; whether there be any truth in the whole story is extremely disputable; the author however might very well expect to gain credit for it, as it has been customary time out of mind, and continues so to this day, for rival poets to tear one another to pieces.

* This story is told at large, in a small and elegant tract lately published, intituled an Essay on the Influence of Philosophy upon the fine Arts, p. 21.

cuse, the unfortunate captives were all put to death, except those, who could repeat any passages from the plays of Euripides; these men, and these alone they pardon'd, caress'd, treated with the utmost respect, and afterwards set them at liberty.

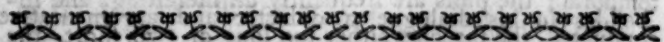
EURIPIDES, fortunately for his own character, as well as for posterity, is come down to us more perfect and entire than either of his cotemporaries; his merit therefore is more easily ascertained; his fables are generally interesting, his plots frequently irregular and artificial, his characters sometimes unequal, but for the most part striking and well contrasted, his sentiments remarkably fine, just and proper, his diction soft, elegant, and persuasive; he abounds much more in moral apophthegms and reflections than Æschylus or Sophocles, which as they are not always introduced with propriety, give some of his tragedies a stiff and scholastic appearance, with which the severer critics have not fail'd to reproach him: it is most probable however that in this he complied with the taste of his age, and in obedience to the dictates of his Friend and master Socrates, who, we may suppose, thought it no disgrace to this favourite poet, to deviate from the rigid rules of the drama, in order to render it more subservient to the noble purposes of piety and virtue; there is besides in his dialogue a didactic and argumentative turn, which favours strongly of the Socratic disputant, and which probably procured him the name of the * philosopher of the theatre.

It is said of Sophocles, that he painted men as they ought to be; of Euripides, that he painted them as they were; a quaint remark, which I shall leave the critics to comment and explain, only observing, that the latter is much

ὁ φιλοσοφὸς τῆς σκηνῆς.

much more familiar than the former, descends much lower into private life, and consequently lets down in some measure the dignity of the buskin, which in Sophocles is always carefully supported: there are some scenes in Euripides where the ideas are so coarse, and the expression so low and vulgar, as, if translated with the utmost caution, would perhaps greatly shock the delicacy and refinement of modern manners; the feeling reader notwithstanding will be amply recompenced by that large portion of the tender and pathetic, the peculiar excellency of this poet, which is diffused throughout his works; his chorusses are remarkably beautiful and poetical: they do not indeed, as Aristotle has observed, always naturally arise from and correspond with the incidents of the drama; this fault however they generally make amends for by the harmony of their numbers, and the many fine moral and religious sentiments, which they contain.

UPON the whole, though Euripides had not perhaps so sublime a genius as Æschylus, or a judgment so perfect as Sophocles, he seems to have written more to the heart than either of them; and if I were to place him with the other two in the school of painters, I should be inclined, from the softness of his pencil, to call him the Corregio of the antient drama.



FROM the works of these three illustrious writers, and from them * alone we must draw all our knowledge of the antient Greek tragedy, which in the view we have

* Of all the Greek tragedies produced by various writers, and which are almost innumerable, we have only thirty-three now remaining, though according to the generally received account, no less than two hundred and sixty or upwards were written only by the three great tragedians; all the rest, except a few inconsiderable fragments, fell a sacrifice to barbarity, and are buried in oblivion.

have here taken of it appears to be full, complete and perfect, and has been miserably disjointed and torn to pieces by the moderns: from the ruins of this noble edifice have arisen two very imperfect structures, the opera and tragedy of latter times, both greatly though not equally defective, the former, confining itself merely to the eye and ear, makes but a slight impression on the mind, whilst the latter, from it's omission of the chorus, music, scenery, and decoration, fall short of that beauty and perfection, which is only to be found in the antient drama; we must at the same time fairly acknowledge that our manners and customs, our opinions, views, taste and judgment, are so different from those of Greece, that her drama is by no means in every respect a proper model and standard for modern poets, and must, after all we can advance in it's favour, always remain among those reproachful monuments of the purity and simplicity of former ages, which we cannot imitate though we are forced to admire.

IT must be at the same time confess'd, that antient tragedy hath it's share with every thing else of human imperfection: too strict an attention to the unities hath settler'd and confined it; many of it's beauties are merely local and temporal; the plots are frequently uninteresting, and ill-conducted, the speeches either too long or too short, the expressions sometimes coarse and indelicate; in the general management and representation of the whole; too much is sacrificed to popular prejudice, superstition and vanity, the ruling passions of an Athenian audience: too strong an attachment to the laws, customs, and form of government then prevailing, threw a dull air of uniformity over the drama; the same story, the same characters and sentiments, even the same expressions too often occur in different tragedies; that simplicity, which so distinguish'd

guish'd the manners of the antients, had naturally it's influence over their taste also; they selected one plain but noble object, and all the variety, which their dramatic poets aim'd at, or which the spectators required of them, was to place that in different lights, without suffering any other to intercept the prospect of it; they admitted no episodes, under-plots, or any of those extraneous incidental ornaments, which make up modern performances, * and confined themselves principally to the faults and imperfections of the great, as Milton observes of them,

‘ High actions, and high passions best describing’

But because their taste was more correct and severe, it doth by no means follow, that it was less true and perfect than our own: the moderns heap incident on incident, sentiment on sentiment, and character on character; a change, which is perhaps rather to be attributed to the corruption of our taste than to the improvement of it: it is always a mark of a vitiated stomach, when wholesome and natural food is rejected with disgust, and provocatives used to raise the appetite; in the same manner, I cannot but be of opinion, that our impatient thirst after what critics affect to call business is nothing but the result of false taste, and depraved judgment: because antient tragedy is not crowded with a heap of unnatural episodes, stuff'd with similies, metaphors, imagery and poetical flowers, the moderns treat it with contempt, and find nothing in it but a poverty of sentiment, a want of order and connection in the scenes, a flatness and insipidity

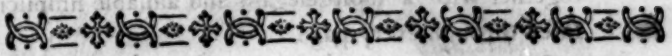
* One of the greatest advantages of modern tragedy over the antient, is perhaps its judicious descent from the adventures of demigods, kings, and heroes, into the humbler walk of private life, which is much more interesting to the generality of mankind.

dity in the dialogue, a coarseness and indelicacy in the expression; but even if we should grant the truth of every objection, there would still remain, to compensate for all these real or seeming imperfections, a variety of true and striking beauties: in antient tragedy, and there only, we shall find a most exact and faithful picture of the manners of Greece, it's religious and civil policy, sublimity both of sentiment and diction, regularity, symmetry and proportion, excellent moral aphorisms and reflections, together with a most elegant and amiable simplicity diffused through every page.

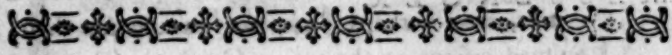
IN a word, to affirm, as many who have more learning than judgment sometimes will, that there are no good tragedies but the antient, is the affectation of scholastic pedantry; to deny them their deserved applause, and treat them with ridicule and contempt, is, on the other hand, the effect of modern pride, ignorance, and petulancy: upon the whole, French, Italian, Spanish and German critics, may perhaps find some excuse for their severe animadversions on the antient Greek tragedy; it may exercise their envy, and find employment for their spleen and ill-nature, as they have nothing of their own to put in competition with it; but Englishmen should be above such envy, and such malevolence, because they can boast a dramatic writer, superior to all that antiquity ever produced: we may safely join with the most sanguine partisans of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, in the sincerest admiration of their several excellencies, and rejoice within ourselves to see them all united and surpass'd in the immortal and inimitable Shakespear.



city in the dialogue, a courteous and indelicacy in the
expression; but even if we should grant the truth of every
objection, this would still remain, to compensate for all
these real or seeming imperfections, a variety of true and
thinking persons, in various capacity, and there only, we
shall find a most exact and a liberal picture of the man-
ners of Greece, its religious and civil policy, sublimity
and point of sentiment and action, regularity, symmetry and
proportion, excellent moral precepts and reflections;
and a most liberal and a noble humanity dis-



THE MESSIAH, or OF ALL, who have more than
their proper measure of wisdom, and have been so good
THAT GOD, in reward of their affection of scholastic
A J A X.
M. N. L. A. U. 2. and have been so good
M. N. L. A. U. 2. and have been so good
M. N. L. A. U. 2. and have been so good



the immortal and venerable Shakespeare
the immortal and venerable Shakespeare
the immortal and venerable Shakespeare
the immortal and venerable Shakespeare
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Dramatis Personæ.

MINERVA.

ULYSSES.

AJAX.

TECMESSA, wife of Ajax.

TEUCER, brother to Ajax.

AGAMEMNON.

MENELAUS.

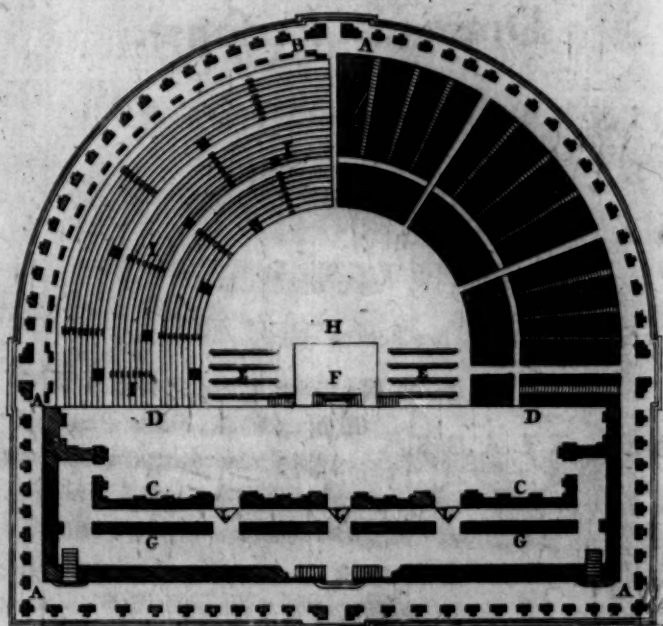
MESSENGER.

CHORUS,

Composed of ancient men of Salamis.



PLAN of a GREEK THEATRE.



- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| A. <i>Lower Portico.</i> | F. <i>The Thymele.</i> |
| B. <i>Upper or third Portico.</i> | G. <i>The Parascenium.</i> |
| C. <i>The Scene.</i> | H. <i>The Orchestra.</i> |
| D. <i>The Proscenium.</i> | I. <i>The Seats.</i> |
| E. <i>The Hyposcenium.</i> | K. <i>The Stair-cases.</i> |
| L. <i>Triangular Machines for the Scenery.</i> | |



A J A X.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A field near the tent of A J A X.

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

MINERVA.

SON of Laertes, thy unwearied spirit
Is ever watchful to surprize the foe ;
I have observ'd thee wand'ring midst the tents
In search of Ajax, where his station lyes,
At th' utmost verge, and meas'ring o'er his steps
But late impress'd ; like Sparta's hounds of scent
Sagacious, dost thou trace him, nor in vain ;
For know, the man thou seek'st is not far from thee ;
Yonder he lyes, with reeking brow and hands
Deep-stain'd with gore ; cease then thy search, and tell me

B

Where-

Sparta's hounds, &c. The dogs of Sparta, according to all the best authors of antiquity, were remarkable for their swiftness and quick scent ; Virgil mentions the, *veloces Spartæ catulos* ; Grætius Faliscus also takes notice of them : our countryman Shakespear, therefore, we see, had good authority for his recommendation of Theseus's hounds, who, he tells us,

Were of the Spartan kind,

So flew'd, so fanded, &c. See his *Midsummer night's dream*

Wherefore thou com'st, that so I may inform
Thy doubting mind, and best assist thy purpose.

U L Y S S E S.

Minerva, dearest of th' immortal pow'rs,
For, tho' I see thee not, that well-known voice
Doth like the Tyrrhene trump awake my soul,
Right hast thou said, I come to search my foe,
Shield-bearing Ajax; him alone I seek:
A deed of horror hath he done this night,
If it be he, for yet we are to know
The certain proof, and therefore came I here
A willing messenger: the cattle all,
Our flocks and herds, are with their shepherds slain,
To Ajax ev'ry tongue imputes the crime;
One of our spies who saw him on the plain,
His sword still reeking with fresh blood, confirm'd it:
Instant I fled to search him, and sometimes

I trace

Tho' I see thee not, &c. It was the acknowledged and indisputable privilege of heathen gods and goddesses to be visible and invisible, as they thought proper, and likewise to extend, whenever they pleased, that privilege to others; in the two first scenes of Ajax we have instances of both; in the first, Minerva is not seen by Ulysses, and in the second, Ulysses, by the power of Minerva, is render'd invisible to Ajax. The reason of the latter is sufficiently evident; for the former is not so easy to assign any, as the goddess had descended on purpose to converse with her favourite; to conceal herself therefore from his sight seems unaccountable.

Shield-bearing Ajax, &c. The greater Ajax is distinguished by Homer, from whom Sophocles copies his character, for his enormous shield, which none but himself was able to lift; in the seventh book of the Iliad we find it thus described.

Stern Telamon behind his ample shield,
As from a brazen tow'r, o'erlook'd the field;
Huge was its orb, with sev'n thick folds o'ercaft
Of tough bull-hides, of solid brass the last.

POPE.



A J A X.

8

I trace his footsteps, which again I lose
I know not how; in happy hour thou com'st
To aid me, goddess; thy protecting hand
Hath rul'd me ever, and to thee I trust
My future fate.

M I N E R V A.

I know it well, Ulysses,
And therefore came to guard and to assist thee
Propitious to thy purpose.

U L Y S S E S.

Do I right,
My much-lov'd mistress?

M I N E R V A.

Doubtless; his foul deed
Doth well deserve it.

U L Y S S E S.

What cou'd prompt his hand
To such a desperate act?

M I N E R V A.

Achilles' arms;
His rage for loss of them.

U L Y S S E S.

But wherefore thus
Destroy the flock?

M I N E R V A.

'Twas in your blood he thought
His hands were stain'd

U L Y S S E S.

Against the Græcians then
Was all his wrath?

M I N E R V A.

And fatal had it prov'd
To them, if I had not prevented it.

4

A J A X.

U L Y S S E S.

What daring insolence cou'd move his soul
To such a deed ?

M I N E R V A.

Alone by night he wander'd
In secret to attack you.

U L Y S S E S.

Did he come
Close to our tents ?

M I N E R V A.

Ev'n to the double portal,
Where rest your chiefs,

U L Y S S E S.

What pow'r cou'd then withhold
His madd'ning hand ?

M I N E R V A.

I purposely deceiv'd
His sight, and sav'd him from the guilty joy,
Turning his rage against the mingled flocks,
Your gather'd spoil ; on these with violence
He rush'd, and slaughter'd many ; now he thought
That he had slain th' Atridæ, now believ'd
Some other chiefs had perish'd by his hand.
I saw his madness and still urg'd him on,
That he might fall into the snare I laid :
Tired with his slaughter now he binds in chains
The living victim, drives the captive herd
Home to his tent, nor doubts but they are men :
There beats with many a stripe the helpless foe,

Bun

There beats with many a Stripe, &c. In allusion to this circumstance, the title of the play in the original is *Αἶας Μαστιγοποῖος*, or, *Ajax the whip-bearer* ; so call'd either by Sophocles himself, or some

A J A X.

5

But I will shew thee this most glaring phrenzy,
That to the Græcians what thy eyes beheld
Thou may'st report; be confident, nor fear
His utmost malice; I shall turn his sight
Askant from thee. Ajax, what ho! come forth,
Thou who dost bind in chains thy captive foes,
Ajax, I say, come forth before the portal.

U L Y S S E S.

What woud'st thou do, Minerva? Do not call him.

M I N E R V A.

What shou'd Ulysses fear?

U L Y S S E S.

O! by the Gods

I do intreat thee, let him stay within.

M I N E R V A.

But wherefore? Thou hast seen him here before.

U L Y S S E S.

He ever was, and is my deadliest foe.

M I N E R V A.

O! but to laugh an enemy to scorn
Is mirth most grateful.

U L Y S S E S.

I had rather still

He came not here.

M I N E R V A

And art thou then afraid

To see a madman?

B 3

U L Y S-

some of the ancient commentators, to distinguish it from Ajax the Locrian, another tragedy written by him, but now lost. As the appellation of whip-bearer, however happily adapted to an Attic, might not so well suit the delicacy of an English ear, I have taken the liberty to sink it upon my readers, who, I apprehend, will be content with the title of, Ajax, only. Mr. Brumoy for the same reason has omitted it, and calls it, in his translation, Ajax furieux.

A J A X.

U L Y S S E S.

I shou'd little dread

The sight of Ajax in his better mind.

M I N E R V A.

He will not see thee be thou e'er so near.

U L Y S S E S.

Impossible! his eyes are still the same,

M I N E R V A.

But I shall throw a veil of darkness o'er them.

U L Y S S E S.

By pow'rs immortal all things may be done.

M I N E R V A.

Wait then in silence till he comes.

U L Y S S E S.

I will;

And yet 'twere better to retire.

M I N E R V A.

What ho!

Ajax,

'Twere better to retire, &c. Sophocles has closely copied his great master, Homer, in the character of Ulysses, who is drawn by them both as a man of extraordinary prudence and circumspection, with more caution than courage, and more cunning than generosity. He is extremely loth, we may observe, to trust himself with Ajax, even though he had a goddess to protect him. I had rather, says he, after all, be a little farther off. Hic (says Camerarius in a note on this passage) est timor prudentiæ, this is but a prudent fear, for who would wish to meet a madman? Brumoy, however, is of another opinion; il me paroît (says he) un peu lâche, & j'avoue que ce trait n'est pas à la louange d'Ulysse ni de Sophocle; mais le roi d'Ithaque étoit trop connu pour le déguiser aux spectateurs, & les idées de prudence & de bravoure étoient alors bien différentes de celles d'aujourd'hui. To say the truth, prudence among the antients seems to have favour'd a little of cowardice, as their courage and valour border'd rather too closely on savageness and brutality.

A J A X.

7

Ajax, again I call thee, wherefore pay'st thou
So little rev'rence to thy guardian pow'r?

S C E N E II.

A J A X, M I N E R V A, U L Y S S E S.

A J A X.

Hail to the daughter of great Jove! to thee,
Minerva, hail! thou com'st in happy hour,
For I will crown thee with the golden spoils
Which I have gain'd by thy assisting hand.

M I N E R V A.

Well hast thou spoke; but say, has Ajax dip'd
His spear in Græcian blood?

A J A X.

It is my boast;

I'll not deny it.

M I N E R V A.

Did'st thou Atridæ feel

Thy vengeful arm?

A J A X.

They never will again

Dishonour Ajax.

M I N E R V A.

If I understand thee,

They are both dead.

A J A X.

They are; now let 'em come,

And take my arms away.

M I N E R V A.

But tell me, Ajax;

Laertes' son, hath he escap'd thy wrath?

A J A X.

Talk'st thou of him, that fox accus'd?

A J A X.

M I N E R V A.

I mean

Thy foe, Ulysses.

A J A X.

O! he is my captive,

The fairest of my spoils, I have him here;

He shall not perish yet.

M I N E R V A.

What 'vantage then

Mean'st thou to draw from his confinement?

A J A X.

First.

I'll have him bound to th' pillar.

M I N E R V A.

And, what then

Wou'dst thou inflict?

A J A X.

His limbs all purpled o'er

With many a bloody stripe; he shall be slain.

M I N E R V A.

Do not torment him thus.

A J A X.

In all things else,

Minerva wou'd I gratify thy will,

But this, and this alone must be his fate.

M I N E R V A.

Since 'tis so pleasing to thee, be it so,

Nor quit thy purpose.

A J A X.

of which most important of black Virgil's has none.
Since 'tis so pleasing to thee. The Greek is, *επειδὴ σοι ἡδύς ἐστι*,
 which literally translated, answers to our phrase, since it is thy plea-
 sure; but this is generally made use of by us from an inferior to a
 superior,

A J A X.

A J A X.

I must to my work ;
Thus, great Minerva, may'st thou ever smile
Propitious on me, and assist thy Ajax !

[Exit.

S C E N E III.

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

MINERVA.

Behold, Ulysses, here the mighty strength
Of pow'r divine : liv'd there a man more wise,
More fam'd for noble deeds than Ajax was ?

U L Y S S E S.

None, none indeed ; alas ! I pity him ;
Ev'n in a foe I pity such distress,
For he is wedded to the worst of woes :
His hapless state reminds me of my own,
And tells me that frail mortals are no more
Than a vain image and an empty shade.

M I N E R V A.

Let such examples teach thee to beware
Against the Gods thou utter aught profane :
And if perchance in riches or in pow'r
Thou shin'st superior, be not insolent ;
For, know, a day sufficeth to exalt
Or to depress the state of mortal man :
The wise and good are by the Gods belov'd,
But those, who practice evil, they abhor.

[Exeunt.

C H O-

superior, and consequently would be improper from Minerva to Ajax, where it is the direct contrary : the only means to say, since it gives thee such extraordinary delight and satisfaction ; which sense I have endeavour'd to express as concisely as possible in the translation.

CHORUS.

I.

To thee, O! Ajax, valiant son
 Of illustrious Telamon,
 Monarch of the sea-girt isle,
 Fair Salamis, if fortune smile
 On thee, I raise the tributary song,
 For praise and virtue still to thee belong:
 But when, inflicted by the wrath of Jove,
 Grecian slander blasts thy fame,
 And foul reproach attaints thy name,
 Then do I tremble like the fearful dove.

II.

To thee, O! Ajax. The chorus is form'd, with great propriety, of Salaminian soldiers, the countrymen and followers of Ajax, who having heard the report, already spread through the army, of Ajax's madness, and the slaughter of the cattle, express the deepest concern for their unhappy master. If the fact asserted was true, such, say they, was the will of the gods who had deprived him of his senses; he is therefore to be pitied, not condemn'd; if, as they are rather inclined to believe, it was only a story invented by the artful Ulysses, on purpose to calumniate him, it behoved the hero immediately to appear and contradict it: of this, interspersed with moral Reflections, consists the first chorus, which according to the commentators was, a song between the acts; the French call it, intermede: the chorus before us is made up, in the original, of anapests, with a strophe, antistrophe, and epode; I have thrown the whole into one irregular ode of eight stanzas, and divided them as the change of sentiment seemed to point out and direct me; whether it be done properly must be left to the determination of the reader.

If fortune smile. The original is *οἱ μὲν εὖ πρᾶσσοντι*, quando bene tecum agitur: so we say a man *does well*, when he succeeds in the world.

II.

So, the last unhappy night,
 Clamours loud did reach mine ear
 And fill'd my anxious heart with fear,
 Which talk'd of Græcian cattle slain,
 And Ajax madd'ning o'er the plain,
 Pleas'd at his prey, rejoicing at the fight.

III.

Thus false Ulysses can prevail,
 Whisp'ring to all his artful tale,
 His tale alas! too willingly receiv'd;
 Whilst those who hear are glad to know
 And happy to insult thy woe,
 For, who asperse the great are easily believ'd.

IV.

The poor, like us, alone are free
 From the darts of calumny,
 Whilst envy still attends on high estate:
 Small is the aid which we can lend,
 Without the rich and pow'rful friend;
 The great support the low, the low assist the great.
 But 'tis a truth which fools will never know;
 From such alone the clamours came
 Which strove to hurt thy spotless fame,
 Whilst we can only weep, and not relieve thy woe.

V.

Happy to 'scape thy piercing sight,
 Behold them wing their rapid flight,
 As trembling birds from hungry vultures fly,
 Sudden again shou'dst thou appear,
 The cowards wou'd be mute with fear,
 And all their censures in a moment dye.

VI.

Last unhappy night. Gr. τὴν ἐσθιεντὴν νύκτος, the night that is
 perished; a remarked Greek idiom.

VI.

Cynthia, goddess of the grove,
 Daughter of immortal Jove,
 To whom at Tauris frequent altars rise,
 Indignant might inspire the deed,
 And bid the guiltless cattle bleed,
 Depriv'd of incense due, and wonted sacrifice.
 Perhaps, sad cause of all our grief and shame!
 The god of war with brazen shield,
 For fancy'd inj'ries in the field,
 Might thus avenge the wrong, and brand thy name.

VII.

For never in his perfect mind,
 Had Ajax been to ill inclin'd,
 On flocks and herds his rage had never spent;
 It was inflicted from above:
 May Phœbus and all-powerful Jove
 Avert the crime, or stop the punishment!
 If to th' Atridæ the bold fiction came
 From Sisyphus' detested race,
 No longer, Ajax, hide thy face,
 But from thy tents come forth, and vindicate thy fame.

VIII.

To whom at Tauris, &c. Ταυροπολαν, id est, Taurivagam vocant Dianam (says Camerarius) vel quod in Taurica culta fuerit, vel propter terculamenta nocturna Hecates, vel nescio quam ob causam, that is, they call Diana Ταυροπολα, either because she was worship'd at Tauris, or because of the nocturnal incantations of Hecate, or for I know not what reason (which by the bye is an excellent way of solving the difficulty;) the first reason however is most probably the true one, which I have therefore adopted in the translation.

From Sisyphus' detested race. Or, in other words, from Ulysses, whom the chorus means to reproach as the bastard son of Sisyphus;

con-

VIII.

Ajax, thy too long repose
 Adds new vigor to thy foes,
 As flames from aiding winds still fiercer grow ;
 Whilst the loose laugh, and shameless lye,
 And all their bitter calumny,
 With double weight oppress, and fill our hearts with woe.

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

SONS of Erechtheus, of Athenian race,
 Ye brave companions of the valiant Ajax,

Oppress'd

concerning which circumstance, the antients, who had perhaps as well as ourselves a little taste for scandal, tell the following tale ; Anticlea the mother of Ulysses, in her journey towards her betroth'd husband, Laertes, was violently seized on by Sisyphus, King of Corinth, and deflowered by him. Ulysses was supposed to have been the fruit of this stolen embrace, though Laertes, who afterwards marry'd the lady, was obliged to educate him as his own. There is likewise another story, to be met with in the scholia, of her being prostituted to Sisyphus by her father Autolicus. Both Æschylus and Euripides mention the bastardy of Ulysses ; Sophocles also repeats it in the *Philoctetes*.

Sons of Erechtheus, &c. The Athenians, who were remarkably proud of their antiquity, stiled themselves, *ἄδωνιοι αὐτοῦ ἄδωνος*, as sprung from the earth, the original natives of that spot, and coeval with the soil they inhabited. Erechtheus is reported to have been the offspring of Vulcan, and the earth ; from him the Athenians boasted their descent, and they could not well go higher : Salamis was not far from Athens ; Sophocles therefore salutes the followers of Ajax by the name of Athenians, and takes this opportunity to indulge the vanity of his countrymen, by calling them the sons of Erechtheus :

Oppress'd with grief behold a wretched woman,
Far from her native soil, appointed here
To watch your hapless lord, and mourn his fate.

C H O R U S.

What new misfortune hath the night brought forth?
Say, daughter of Teleutas, for with thee
His captive bride, the noble Ajax deigns
To share the nuptial bed, and therefore thou
Can'st best inform us.

T E C M E S S A.

How shall I declare

Sadder than death th' unutterable woe!
This night, with madness seiz'd, hath Ajax done
A dreadful deed; within thou may'st behold

The

Erechtheus: for joining the inhabitants of Salamis to the Athenians, Sophocles had the authority of Homer;

With these appear the Salaminian bands,
Whom the gigantic Telamon commands;
In twelve black ships, to Troy they steer their course,
And with the great Athenians join their force.

POPE'S Homer, B. 2. L. 670.

Daughter of Teleutas, &c. Tecmessa, who is here introduced as the wife of Ajax, fell to him, as Briseis to Achilles, by the fate of war: her father Teleutas, was a petty king in Phrygia, whose dominions being taken and plundered by Ajax, the daughter became his captive, and was afterwards advanced to his bed, in quality, we may suppose, of his chief sultana; by her, we find, he had a child whom the father named Euryfaces, from *εὐρύς* *σάκος*, a broad shield, in memory of that part of his own armour, by which, as we have before observed, he was so eminently distinguished; this child is afterwards brought on the stage, a circumstance artfully introduced by the poet, to heighten the distress of the piece. Homer, in his catalogue of famous mistresses, has not forgot our heroine.

Movit Ajacem Telamone natum,
Forma captivæ dominum Tecmessæ.

Lib. 9. Od. 4.

The tents o'erspread with bloody carcases
Of cattle slain, the victims of his rage.

C H O R U S.

Sad news indeed thou bring'st of that brave man,
A dire disease! and not by human aid
To be remov'd; already Greece hath heard
And wond'ring crouds repeat the dreadful tale:
Alas! I fear th' event! I fear me much,
Lest with their flocks and herds the shepherds slain,
Against himself he lift his murth'rous hand.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! this way he led his captive spoils,
And some he slew, and others tore in funder;
From out the flock two rams of silver hue
He chose, from one the head and tongue divided,
He cast them from him; then the other chain'd
Fast to the pillars with a doubled rein
Bore cruel stripes, and bitt'rest execrations,
Which not from mortal came, but were inspir'd
By that avenging god who thus torments him.

C H O R U S.

Now then, my friends, (for so the time demands)
Each o'er his head shou'd cast the mournful veil,
And instant fly, or to our ships repair,
And sail with speed; for dreadful are the threats
Of the Atridae; death may be our lot,
And we shall meet an equal punishment
With him whom we lament, our frantic lord.

T E C M E S S A.

He raves not now; but like the southern blast,
When lightning's cease and all the storm is o'er,
Grows calm again; yet to his sense restor'd,
He feels new griefs; for, O! to be unhappy,

And

And know ourselves alone the guilty cause
Of all our sorrows; is the worst of woes.

C H O R U S.

Yet if his rage subside we shou'd rejoice;
The ill remov'd, we shou'd remove our care,

T E C M E S S A.

Hadst thou then rather, if the choice were giv'n,
Thyself at ease, behold thy friend in pain,
Than with thy friend be join'd in mutual sorrow?

C H O R U S.

The double grief is sure the most oppressive.

T E C M E S S A.

Therefore, tho' not distemper'd, I am wretched.

C H O R U S.

I understand thee not.

T E C M E S S A.

The noble Ajax,

Whilst he was mad, was happy in his phrenzy,
And yet the while affected me with grief
Who was not so; but now his rage is o'er;
And he has time to breathe from his misfortune,
Himself is almost dead with grief, and I
Not less unhappy than I was before;
Is it not double then?

C H O R U S.

It is indeed;

And much I fear the wrath of angry heav'n,
If from his madness ceas'd he yet receive
No kind relief.

T E C M E S S A.

'Tis so; and 'twere most fit

You knew it well.

C H O-

C H O R U S.

Say then how it began;

For like thyself we feel for his misfortunes.

T E C M E S S A.

Since you partake the sorrows of a friend,
I'll tell you all; know then, at dead of night,
What time the evening taper were expir'd,
Snatching his sword, he seem'd as if he meant
To roam abroad, I saw and chid him for it;
What woud'st thou do, I cry'd, my dearest Ajax?
Unask'd, uncall'd for, whither woud'st thou go?
No trumpet sounds to battle, the whole host
Is wrap'd in sleep; then did he answer me
With brief but sharp rebuke, as he was wont
“ Woman, thy sex's noblest ornament
Is silence;” thus reprov'd, I said no more;
Then forth he rush'd alone, where, and for what,
I knew not; but returning, he brought home
In chains the captive herd, in pieces some
He tore, whilst others bound like slaves he lash'd
Indignant; then out at the portal ran,
And with some shadow seem'd to hold discourse;
Against th' Atridae, and Ulysses oft
Wou'd he inveigh; or, laughing loud, rejoice
That he had ta'en revenge for all his wrongs;
Then back he came; at length, by slow degrees,

C

His

With some shadow, &c. This alludes to his conversation with Minerva, in the first act; Tecmessa, we may suppose, was in a chamber adjoining to them, and overheard their discourse; but as Minerva had render'd both herself and Ulysses invisible, Tecmessa could not imagine whom he was talking to; she adds this circumstance therefore to the other symptoms of his madness. There is a passage not unlike this in Hamlet.

See Act. 3. Sc. 10.

His phrenzy ceas'd ; when soon as he beheld
 The tents o'erwhelm'd with slaughter, he cry'd out,
 And beat his brain ; roll'd o'er the bloody heaps
 Of cattle slain, and tore his clotted hair,
 Long fix'd in silence : then, with horrid threats
 He bad me tell him all that had befall'n,
 And what he had been doing ; I obey'd,
 Trembling with fear, and told him all I knew.
 Instant he pour'd forth bitt'rest lamentations,
 Such as I ne'er had heard from him before,
 For grief like that, he oft wou'd say, betray'd
 A weak and little mind, and therefore ever
 When sorrow came, refrain'd from loud complaint,
 And, like the lowing heifer, inly mourn'd.
 But sinking now beneath this sore distress,
 He will not taste of food or nourishment ;
 Silent he sits, amid the slaughter'd cattle,
 Or, if he speaks, utters such dreadful words
 As shew a mind intent on something ill.
 Now then, my friends, for therefore came I hither,
 O ! if ye have the pow'r, assist me now ;
 Perhaps ye may ; for oft th' afflicted man
 Will listen to the counsels of a friend.

C H O-

He will not taste of food. The abstinence of Ajax on this occasion, which, we may imagine, was not peculiar to himself, seems to be among those customs which the Grecians borrow'd from the eastern nations : we read in scripture, that when David was afflicted for the loss of his child, he would not eat bread, nor drink wine ; it appears from this, and many other passages in Sophocles, that he was no stranger to the manners and phraseology of the orientals ; though I would not, on this occasion, venture to affirm, that David and Sophocles were but one person, in imitation of my learned predecessor, Duport, who so positively asserted, that Homer and Solomon were the same.

C H O R U S.

O! daughter of Teleutas, horrible
Indeed thy tidings are of noble Ajax,
Thus raving, and thus miserable.

(A J A X within groans?)

Oh!

T E C M E S S A.

Louder you'll hear him soon; mark'd ye, my friends,
How deep his groans?

(A J A X within.)

O! me!

C H O R U S.

He seems to rave,

Or mourns, reflecting on his madness past.

(A J A X within.)

Boy, boy!

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! he calls Euryfaces,

Where art thou, child? What wou'd he have with thee?

(A J A X within.)

Teucer, 'tis thee I call, where art thou, Teucer?

Still must he chace his prey, whilst Ajax dyes?

C H O R U S.

He seems of perfect mind----open the doors,
Let him come forth, who knows but fight of us
May keep him so.

T E C M E S S A.

I'll open them-----now fee

The doors are thrown open, and Ajax discover'd)

Your master there, and judge of his condition.

S C E N E II.

A J A X, T E C M E S S A, C H O R U S.

A J A X.

My dear companions, who alone deserve
The name of friends, ye see the dreadful storm
How it o'erwhelms me.

C H O R U S.

What thou said'st, alas ! (*aside to Tecmessa.*)
Was but too true, he seems indeed distracted.

A J A X.

My fellow-sailors ! whose assisting hand
Ply'd the tough oar, and led me thro' the main,
From you alone can I expect to meet

Or

My dear companions, &c. From line 347 to line 427 of the original, instead of the common metre, it is all strophe and antistrophe, which was most probably set to music and sung in the manner of the chorus : this was often done by Sophocles and the other tragic writers in the more pathetic and impassion'd parts of the drama, and met, as we may imagine, with a favourable reception in the Grecian theatre ; but as question and answer put into ode or rhyme would have a different effect amongst us, I have preserved the blank verse in this and some other parallel passages, as more proper for dialogue.

Seems indeed distracted. Ajax is here represented as sitting alone in his tent just recover'd from his delirium, and reflecting with horror on what he had done during the continuance of it : what the chorus here observes concerning his distraction doth not therefore proceed from any thing which he says, but, probably, from a wildness in his looks and gesture which still remained, and induced them to believe that his distemper was not quite removed. Ajax, indeed, as Brumoy observes, seems throughout this whole scene like the sea after a storm, whose waves are still agitated, and subsiding by degrees into calmness and tranquillity.

Or love or friendship; therefore shew it now,
And kill me.

C H O R U S.

Talk not thus, nor thus increase
By added woes thy dreadful malady.

A J A X.

Dost thou behold this once intrepid Ajax,
The brave, the mighty, long for strength renown'd
And dauntless courage in the bloody field,
Dost thou behold him? O what laughter now,
What vile reproach must he sustain!

T E C M E S S A.

O Ajax,

My lord, my master, do not talk thus sadly.

A J A X to T E C M E S S A.

Wilt thou not home? Wilt not be gone?

T E C M E S S A.

Oh me?

C H O R U S.

Be patient; by the Gods let me intreat you.
Be more compos'd.

A J A X.

Wretch that I was, to let
The curst Atridæ scape, and shed the blood
Of harmless cattle!

C H O R U S.

But why sorrow thus
For what is past, and cannot be recall'd?

C 3

A J A X.

Wilt thou not home, &c. The mind of Ajax is so disturb'd that he returns the tenderness of his wife with peevishness and anger. I have endeavour'd in the translation to render it with that brevity and sharpness which passion generally makes use of. The ladies may observe the modesty of Tecmessa's behaviour; she answers him only with a sigh.

A J A X.

A J A X.

How will that subtle instrument of ill,
Laertes' prying son, insult me now,
And smile at my misfortunes!

C H O R U S.

That must be

As seems most fitting to the Gods; from them
Or grief or joy must flow.

A J A X.

O wou'd to heav'n

That I cou'd see him! wretched as I am!

C H O R U S.

This is no time for boasting: see'st thou not
How very weak thou art?

A J A X.

Almighty Jove,

My great progenitor! O grant me this!
Grant me to slay that hateful, talking slave,
With the proud princes; then well pleas'd myself
Shou'd perish last.

T E C M E S S A.

O! if thou pray'st for death,

Pray too for mine; for wherefore shou'd I live
When thou art gone?

A J A X.

O darkness, my best light

And hope! O wrap me in your friendly shade,
A willing guest! I dare not look for help,
Or from the Gods above, or men below:
The pow'rful daughter of eternal Jove

To

Jove, my great progenitor! Ajax's genealogical table stands thus: Ajax was the son of Telamon, the son of Æacus, the son of Jove. Jupiter therefore was his great grandfather.

To death devotes me: whither can I fly,
Or where remain, my fame and glory lost
In this sad phrenzy? left without a friend,
And the whole army bent on my destruction!

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! how dreadful 'tis to hear such words,
Which Ajax never wou'd have spoke before!

A J A X.

Ye well-known floods that roll into the main,
Ye caves and forests by the rocky shore!
Years heap'd on years fast by the walls of Troy
Have ye detain'd me, but no longer now
Amongst the living shall ye ever see
The hapless Ajax; this remember all:
Nor shall thy neighb'ring waves, Scamander, still
To Greece beneficent, behold me more:
Troy never saw, forgive the boastful word,
A braver, nobler foe than Ajax was,
Tho' now dishonour'd thus, and thus oppress'd.

C H O R U S.

I wou'd not have thee thus lament thy woes,
And yet I know not how to chide thee for it,
So hard thy lot.

A J A X.

Who wou'd have thought my name
Wou'd e'er so well have suited my condition!

C 4

O!

Who wou'd have thought my name, &c. To know the meaning of this passage, the reader should understand Greek; it being nothing more than a poor pun on the name of Ajax, which in the original begins with *ai*, an exclamation like our Oh! expressive of pain and sorrow. It is, to say the truth, not very worthy of Sophocles, and much of a piece with Shakespear's,

-----This is Rome indeed,
And room enough.

JUL. CÆSAR.

But

O! I have reason to lament indeed;
 For sure there is not such a wretch as Ajax!
 Long since at Troy my valiant father fought,
 And to his native land, with glory crown'd,
 Bore back the meed of his distinguish'd virtues:
 Nor less renown'd for gallant deeds was once
 His hapless son, tho' now he perish thus
 Inglorious: yet Achilles, well I know,
 Were he alive, and to bestow his arms
 On him who best deserv'd the prize, to me
 And me alone wou'd judge the great reward:
 But little deem'd th' Atridæ worth like mine,
 And therefore gave them to that vile impostor,
 Author of ev'ry evil work, Ulysses.
 Had not my mind been wrought on by some pow'r
 Superior, and my eyes averted from them,
 They had not liv'd to give another sentence;
 But Jove's great daughter, the invincible,
 The dreadful Pallas, turn'd my arm aside,
 Just rais'd against them, and inspir'd me thus
 With horrid rage to dip my murth'rous hand
 In blood of guiltless cattle: they mean time
 Smile at the danger escap'd, and triumph o'er me.
 But, when the Gods oppose us valour bends
 To cowardice and strength to weakness yields:
 What then can Ajax? hateful to the gods,
 By Troy detested, and by Greece forsaken?
 Shall I go leave the Atridæ here alone
 To fight their cause, and seek my native land?

But

But our Author is not often guilty of this, and should therefore be
 pardon'd for it. Ovid, who loved trifling, has also play'd upon the
 name of Ajax. See Met. Lib. 13.

To lament. Another pun; the word *αἰνέειν* signifying to lament.

But how shall I appear before my father,
 How will he bear to see his Ajax thus
 Spoil'd of his honours! he who ever crown'd
 With glory sits; it must not, can not be.
 What if I rush amid the Trojan host,
 And with my single arm oppose them all,
 Do something noble, and as nobly perish!
 But that wou'd please th' Atridæ, therefore never
 Shall it be done: No, I will do a deed
 To shew my father that I still deserve
 The name of son, and emulate my fire:
 When life but teems with unremitted woes,
 'Tis poor in man to wish a longer date:
 For what can day on day, and year on year
 But put off wish'd-for death, and lengthen pain?
 Of little worth is he who still depends
 On fruitless hope; for it becomes the brave
 To live with honour, or to die with glory.
 Ye have my thoughts.

C H O R U S.

Thoughts not unworthy of thee,
 Ajax; but quit, O! quit thy horrid purpose,
 And yield thee to thy friends.

T E C M E S S A.

My lord, my master,

My

My lord, my master, &c. This speech of Tecmessa's has been deservedly applauded by the critics as one of the most masterly and pathetic in the whole tragedy. Ce ne font pas (says Brumoy) de ces sentimens delicats & recherchéz qu'on a mis depuis à la mode sur le théâtre; ce sont les expressions vives de l'amitié conjugal. This scene, as well as that which follows between Ajax and his son, is manifestly imitated from the parting of Hector and Andromache in the 6th book of Homer's Iliad, to which I refer my readers. The copy is not, perhaps, much inferior to the original.

My dearest Ajax, dreadful are the ills
 Which cruel fortune brings on human kind :
 Of noblest race (a better Phrygia boasts not)
 Tecmeffa was, and from a father sprung
 Happy and free, tho' now a wretched slave ;
 For so the Gods and thy all conq'ring arm
 Decreed : but since, partaker of thy bed,
 Thou know'st I ever have with tend'rest care
 Watch'd o'er thee : therefore, by domestic Jove,
 Here I intreat thee, by the sacred tie
 That binds us, let me not with foul reproach
 And bitter scorn be taunted by thy foes,
 When they surround me, as I know they will :
 For O ! when thou shalt die, that very day
 The Greeks with violence will seize on me ;
 Tecmeffa then and thy lov'd son shall eat
 The bread of slav'ry ; then some haughty lord
 Insulting loud, shall cry, behold the wife
 Of Ajax, once the pride of all our host,
 How is she fall'n ! from envy'd happiness
 To servitude and woe ! such vile upbraidings
 Oft shall I hear, on thee and on thy race
 Casting foul shame : O ! then relent, my Ajax ;
 Think on thy father in the vale of years,
 Think on thy aged mother, who with vows
 Incessant prays the Gods to send thee back
 Safe to thy native land ! pity thy son,
 Without a father in his tender youth

To

The bread of slav'ry. This is literally translated ; the expression is much in the stile of the scriptures, where we meet with the bread of sorrow, the bread of wickedness, the bread of sincerity, and the like.

To form his mind, left to th' unfriendly hands
 Of those who love him not : Alas ! what woes
 Wilt thou bequeath to me and to thy child !
 I have no hope, no stay but thee alone.
 Thy hand destroy'd my country, and my mother ;
 Death snatch'd my father to the realms below ;
 Depriv'd of thee what country will receive me,
 Or where shall I subsist ? Thou art my all,
 My only safe-guard : do not, do not leave me ?
 Nought so becomes a man as gratitude
 For good receiv'd, and noble deeds are still
 The offspring of benevolence, whilst he
 With whom remembrance dies of blessings past
 Is vile and worthless.

C H O R U S.

O ! that thou cou'dst feel
 Pity like mine for this unhappy woman !
 Then wou'dst thou say her words deserve thy praise.

A J A X.

And prais'd she shall be if she but perform
 What I require.

T E C M E S S A.

In all will I obey thee,
 My dearest Ajax !

A J A X.

I wou'd see my child ;
 Let him be brought.

T E C M E S S A.

I hid him from thy sight
 Because of-----

A J A X.

My distemper, was it not ?

T E C-

T E C M E S S A.

It was : I fear'd indeed thou might'st destroy him :

A J A X.

And well thou might'st : a deed like that became

My sad condition,

T E C M E S S A.

Therefore to prevent it

I kept him from thee.

A J A X.

I approve thy caution.

T E C M E S S A.

What woud'st thou have me do ?

A J A X.

Let me behold

And speak to him.

T E C M E S S A.

He is not far from hence,

The servants have him in their care.

A J A X.

Then why

May I not see him ?

T E C M E S S A.

Boy ! thy father calls thee :

Let some one bring him hither.

A J A X.

Is he coming,

Doth he not hear thee ?

T E C M E S S A.

They have brought him to thee.

[Enter servants with EURYSACES.]

S C E N E

S C E N E III.

EURYSACES, TECMESSA, AJAX, CHORUS.

A J A X.

Bring him this way: for if he be the son
 Of Ajax, the fresh blood that hangs about me
 Will not affright him; he must learn like me
 In earliest years the savage laws of war,
 And be inur'd to scenes of death and slaughter:
 May'st thou, my boy, be happier than thy father:
 In all things else it will be no disgrace
 To copy me: I envy thee, my child,
 For that thou see'st not thy own wretchedness;
 The happiness of life is not to know.
 Thy ignorance will keep thee free from pain,
 Till time shall teach thee what it is to grieve
 And to rejoice; then must thou shew thy foes
 From whom thou art descended: may the breath
 Of life mean time nourish thy tender frame,
 That thou may'st prove a comfort to thy mother!
 I know there's not a Grecian that will dare
 Insult thee, when thy father is no more;
 For I shall leave thee to the best of guardians,
 The faithful Teucer, who far from thee now
 Sent forth by Greece repels th' invading foe.
 Of you, my friends, companions of the war,
 The only boon I ask is, that ye urge
 This last request to Teucer, say, I begg'd
 That strait to Telamon and Eriboea,
 My aged parents, he wou'd bear my child,
 To be the joy of their declining years,
 Till death shall call them to the shades below:

Let

Let not my arms by Greece, or by that plague
 Ulysses, e'er be made the prize of glory
 For rival chiefs: but do thou take, my boy,

[turning to EURYSACES.

The sev'nfold, vast, impenetrable shield
 Whose name thou bear'st; the rest be bury'd with me.
 Take hence the child with speed; nor in the tents
 Let there be wailings: Women ever love
 To brood o'er sorrows, and indulge their woe.
 Shut to the door. The wound that must be cut
 No wise physician will attempt to heal
 With incantation, elegy, or song.

C H O R U S.

I tremble when I hear thee threat'ning thus
 With sharp and piercing voice.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! my lord,

What wilt thou do?

A J A X.

Guess not; inquire not of me;
 Be silent, and be wise; it will become thee.

T E C-

The rest be bury'd with me. The custom of burying the arms of deceased warriors in the same grave with them is very antient, and is practised amongst the Indians at this day. This whole speech of Ajax, it is observed by the commentators, carries with it the air and form of his last will and testament; he gives orders to his wife and family as a man immediately about to quit the world: this raises the passion of pity in the spectators, and prepares them for the catastrophe.

Incantation, elegy, and song. The Greek word *τελεσιουργία* is here used by Sophocles for a charm or incantation, a method of curing diseases frequently made use of by the ancients.

A J A X.

31

T E C M E S S A.

How am I tortur'd ! by the Gods I beg thee,
By our dear child, do not destroy us both.

A J A X.

Thou do'st perplex me ; why revere the Gods ?
I am not bound to't, for I owe them nothing.

T E C M E S S A.

Be not so impious.

A J A X.

Talk to those will hear thee.

T E C M E S S A.

Art thou resolv'd then ?

A J A X.

'Tis too much ; thy grief
Grows troublesome.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas ! my lord, I fear----

[to the CHORUS.

A J A X.

Will ye not take her hence ?

T E C M E S S A.

O ! by the Gods

I beg thee, be persuaded.

A J A X.

Thou art mad

To think thy words will ever change my purpose.

[Exeunt.

O D E.

Change my purpose. Ajax, we must here suppose, breaks from Tecmessa and retires : she goes out, and the chorus remains on the stage to lament their own unhappy condition, and express their fears for Ajax.

O D E

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

O happiest, best abode, my native isle,
 Fair Salamis, encompass'd by the sea,
 On thee whilst Gods and men indulgent smile,
 My country, O behold and pity me !
 A long long time on Ida's plain,
 Thus doom'd inglorious to remain,
 While circling years roll o'er my wretched head :
 New terrors still affright me here,
 Still is my heart appall'd with fear,
 Left I should visit soon the mansions of the dead.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

The woes of Ajax too im bitter mine,
 The bravest leader of the Grecian host,
 Untimely visited by wrath divine,
 And in the desp'rate, cruel phrenzy lost.
 There was a time when sent by thee
 He gain'd the wreath of victory,
 Tho' now his weeping friends lament his fall :
 Th' ungrateful chiefs revere no more
 The virtues they admir'd before ;
 His gallant deeds are now forgotten all.

S T R O P H E. II.

Weigh'd down with years, when thou in hoary age
 Unhappy mother, shalt these tidings hear
 Of thy dear Ajax, and his cruel rage,
 How wilt thou weep and wail with grief sincere !
 Not like the plaintive nightingale
 That warbles sweet her tender tale,

But

But with loud shrieks of horrible despair:

With sharpest anguish sore oppress'd,

Then shalt thou beat thy aged breast,

And in deep sorrow rend thy wild dishevell'd hair.

ANTISTROPHE II.

'Tis better far to die than, hopeless still

Of cure, to languish under sore disease;

When mortals suffer such distinguish'd ill

The silent tomb is liberty and ease.

Ajax, the pride of all our host,

His antient fame and glory lost,

Sinks down at last o'erwhelm'd with soul disgrace:

How will his hapless father bear

His sons distressful fate to hear,

Ev'n such as never fell on Æacus his race!

ACT III.

SCENE I.

AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

A J A X.

STILL are the secret things of man reveal'd,

And what is known again in darkness hid

By endless and immeasurable time;

D

And

Act 3. Brumoy, in opposition to all the critics, translators and commentators, and without assigning any reason, extends this act to the end of the next chorus, and begins the third with the arrival of the messenger from Teucer; which makes the division of the acts very unequal, the second containing, in the original, upwards of five hundred lines, and the third not above one; but as I observed in the dissertation, the custom of mincing the ancient tragedy into five acts is merely arbitrary, and without any foundation, as it was most probably one continued act extending itself through the whole Drama.

And nothing is there but in length of days
 May come to pass; ev'n sacred oaths are broken,
 And the fix'd mind, perverse and obstinate,
 Subdu'd by time: I, who like harden'd steel
 Was late inflexible, am soften'd now
 To pity and remorse by this dear woman;
 I cannot bear to leave her here a widow
 Amidst her foes, or to forsake my child,
 A helpless orphan: No; I will retire
 Along the shore, and seek the running stream,
 Avert the wrath of angry heav'n, and wash
 My crimes away; there haply shall I find
 Some unfrequented spot where I may hide
 This fatal weapon, this destructive sword;
 O! I will bury't deep in earth, that none
 May see it more, but night and Erebus
 Preserve it still from ev'ry mortal eye.
 E'er since that hapless day, when from the hand
 Of Hector I receiv'd this dreadful boon,
 Nought have I had from Greece but pain and woe:
 True is the adage, "from the hands of foes
 Gifts are not gifts, but injuries most fatal."
 Hereafter will I yield me to the Gods
 And the Atridae; since they are my masters,
 'Tis meet that I obey them: all that's strong
 And mighty must submit to pow'rs superior:
 Doth not the snowy winter to the bloom
 Of fruitful summer yield? and night obscure,
 When by white steeds Aurora drawn lights up

The

This fatal weapon. Ajax, who is secretly resolved to destroy himself, says this to prevent the suspicions of his wife and friends from his carrying his sword out with him: the spectators plainly see his intent by his industry to conceal it.

The rising day, submissively retire?
 The roaring sea, long vext by angry winds,
 Is lull'd by milder zephyrs to repose,
 And oft the fetters of all-conqu'ring sleep
 Are kindly loos'd to free the captive mind;
 From nature then, who thus instructs mankind,
 Why should not Ajax learn humility?
 Long since I knew to treat my foe like one
 Whom I hereafter as a friend might love
 If he deserved it, and to love my friend
 As if he still might one day be my foe:
 For little is the trust we can repose
 In human friendships: but to my intent;
 Go thou, Tecmessa, and beseech the Gods
 To grant what I request: do you perform
 The same kind office; and when Teucer comes,
 Tell him, the care of me and of my friends
 I leave to him: whither I must, I must:
 Obey my orders: wretched as I am
 Soon shall ye see me freed from all my woes. [Exeunt.

D 2

SCENE

Long since I knew, &c. Tully in his *Lælius*, *sive de Amicitia*, disclaims this selfish and worldly maxim as destructive of all friendship. The saying is generally attributed to the celebrated Bias, one of the seven sages of Greece.

Soon shall ye see me, &c. The expression, we may observe, is ambiguous, and the sense left doubtful on purpose to deceive the chorus, who misunderstanding him, immediately on his leaving them break out into a song of joy on his recovery. This besides (as the commentators have remark'd) gives time for Ajax to retire before the arrival of the messenger.

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S T R O P H E.

Now let sounds of mirth and joy
 Ev'ry blisful hour employ :
 Borne on pleasure's airy wing
 Io Pan ! to thee we sing :
 Thee, whom on the rocky shore
 Wreck-scap'd mariners adore,
 Skill'd the mazy dance to lead,
 Teach, O ! teach our feet to tread
 The round which Cretan Cnossus knows,
 At Nyssa which spontaneous rose ;
 Pan, O ! guide this tuneful throng,
 While to thee we raise the song,
 From Cyllene's snowy brow,
 King of pleasures, hear us now !
 From thy mountains O ! appear !
 Joy and happiness are here :
 And do thou, O ! Delian king,
 Now thy aid propitious bring !
 O ! from the Icarian sea
 Come, Apollo, smile on me.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

All our sorrows now are o'er,
 Grief and madness are no more :
 See, the happy day appears,
 Mighty Jove ! that ends our fears ;
 Let us, free from ev'ry care,
 Gladly to our ships repair ;
 Ajax now in sweet repose
 Sinks, forgetful of his woes ;

Humbly

Humbly to the Gods resign'd,
 He devotes his better mind :
 Time that withers can restore
 Human pleasures ; now no more
 Must we say our vows are vain ;
 Nought unhop'd for shou'd remain ;
 Since, beyond our wishes, see
 Ajax from his madness free ;
 'Gainst th' Atridæ all his rage
 See how milder thoughts assuage,
 Bitter strife and quarrels cease ;
 All is harmony and peace.

S C E N E III.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

My Friends, I bear you news of highest import ;
 From Myfia's rocky mountains hither comes
 The noble Teucer ; know, ev'n now I saw him
 Amid the Grecian host, who, as he came,
 Surrounded, and on ev'ry side pour'd forth
 Reproaches on him ; not a man but cry'd
 " Behold the brother of that frantic foe,
 To Greece and to her council : " such their rage
 That they had well-nigh ston'd him ; swords were drawn,
 And dire had been the conflict, but that some
 Among the aged chiefs by calm advice
 Appeas'd the strife : but where is Ajax gone ?
 That I may tell him : from our masters nought
 Shou'd be conceal'd.

A J A X.

CHORUS.

He is not now within,
But just steps forth, as if on some new act
Intent, well-suited to his better mind.

MESSENGER.

Alas ! too late did Teucer send me here,
Or I am come too slowly.

CHORUS.

Why regret
His absence thus ?

MESSENGER.

'Twas Teucer's strict command
He shou'd be kept within the tent, nor stir
Till he arriv'd.

CHORUS.

But, to his sense restor'd,
He went to deprecate the wrath divine
And expiate his offence.

MESSENGER.

Thy words are vain,
If Chalcas prophecy aright.

CHORUS.

What then
Did Chalcas say ? Dost thou know aught of this ;

MESSENGER.

Thus far I know, for I was witness of it :
Chalcas, retiring from th' assembled chiefs
Apart from the Atridae, gently press'd
The hand of Teucer, and in tend'rest friendship
Besought him that by ev'ry human art
And means to be devis'd, he wou'd prevent
Ajax his wand'ring forth this fatal day,
If he did ever wish to see him more :

This

This day alone, he said, Minerva's wrath
 Wou'd last against him; oft the mighty fall
 In deep Affliction, smit by angry heav'n,
 When, mortal-born, to human laws they yield not
 As mortals ought, submissively: thus spake
 The Prophet, and long since was Ajax deem'd
 To have a mind disturb'd: when first he left
 His native soil, be conqueror, O! my child,
 His father said, but conquer under God;
 Impious and proud his answer was, "the worst
 "Of men, (he cry'd) assisted by the Gods
 "May conquer, I shall do the work without them;"
 Such were his boastings: and when Pallas once
 With kind assistance urg'd him to the fight,
 Dreadful and horrible was his reply;
 "Go, queen, to other Grecians lend thy aid,
 "'Tis needless here; for know, where Ajax is
 "The foe will never come:" by words like these,
 And pride ill-suited to a mortal's pow'r,
 Did he offend the vengeful deity;
 But if he lives, we may preserve him still,
 The Gods assisting; so the prophet spake;
 And Teucer bad me say, you all shou'd try
 To keep him here; but if that cannot be,
 And Chalcas judge aright, he is no more.

[to TECMESSA within.]

CHORUS.

What ho! Tecmessa, most unhappy woman!
 Come forth and hear the tidings that he brings,
 They wound us deep, and all our joys are gone.

SCENE IV.

TECMESSA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

Scarce do I breathe from still-repeated woes,
And now again thou call'st me; wherefore? speak.

CHORUS.

This messenger hath brought us dreadful news
Concerning Ajax: hear him.

TECMESSA.

O! what is it?
Am I undone?

MESSENGER.

I know not what thou art;
But if thy Ajax be gone forth, my fears
Are great for him.

TECMESSA.

Alas! he is; but, why?
How thou afflict'st me!

MESSENGER.

Teucer hath forbid
His wand'ring thus alone.

TECMESSA.

But why forbid him?
And where is Teucer?

MESSENGER.

He will soon be here:
He fears this fatal Day.

TECMESSA.

Undone Tecmessa!
Whence are his fears? who told him 'twou'd be fatal?

MES-

MESSENGER.

Thestorian Chalcas did foretel, this day
To life or death wou'd fix the fate of Ajax.

[to the CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

Assist me, friends, in this distressful hour.
To Teucer haste, and bring him to my aid;
Some to yon western mountain bend your way,
And some to th' east; find out which path he went:
Unhappy wand'rer! O! he has deceiv'd me,
His former love forgotten all and gone!
What must we do, my child? I must not sit
Inactive here; no, wheresoe'er I can
I'll go to search him: let us haste, my friends,
Quick, fly this instant, if we mean to save
The wretched Ajax rushing on destruction.

CHORUS.

Behold us ready, not in word alone,
But bent with speed to follow thee. Away.

[Exeunt.

A C T IV.

SCENE I.

A J A X.

TH E R E stands my sword, and fix'd as it may best
Perform its office; 'twas the gift of Hector,
My worst of foes, whom I detested ever:
The steel-devouring stone hath sharpen'd well
Its keenest edge; bury'd in Trojan earth
It lyes, and now in kindness seems prepar'd
To end my wretched life; thus far is well:
And now, O! Jove, for first to thee 'tis fit

We

We pay due honours, I address my pray'r;
 I ask not much; I ask thee but to send
 Some passing stranger here to bear the news
 Of my unhappy fate to Teucer's ear,
 That he may first behold, and take me hence,
 Left by my foes discover'd, I be cast
 A pray to dogs and birds; forbid it, Jove!
 Thee too, great leader of departed souls,
 Terrestrial Hermes, thee I call, O! hear me;
 With easy steps, and swift, conduct me safe
 To my abode, soon as his fatal sword
 Shall reach my breast; and you, ye virgin pow'rs,
 From whom whate'er befalls of human ill
 Cannot be hid, ye goddesses rever'd,
 Swift to pursue the guilty, O! behold
 The wretched Ajax by th' Atridæ fall!
 O! seize the murth'ers! by my own sad hand
 As I shall perish, let my foes be slain
 By those whom most they love! quick, fly, begone,
 Ye vengeful furies, gorge yourselves in blood,
 Nor spare a man of all the Grecian host;
 And thou, O! sun, who driv'st the flaming car
 Along the vaulted sky, when thou shalt see
 My native soil, O! stop thy golden reins;
 Tell the sad story to my hapless fire,
 And my afflicted mother; when she hears
 The mournful tale, her grief will fill the land
 With dreadful lamentations: but 'tis vain
 To weep my fate: the business must be done.
 O! death, look on me, death; I come to thee:
 Soon shall we meet: but thee, O! glorious day,
 And yon bright charioteer the sun, no more
 Shall I behold, ev'n now thou hear'st my last
 My

My dying words: O! light, O! sacred soil
 Of Salamis, my country, and her gods,
 O! noble Athens, O! my lov'd companions,
 Ye rivers, fountains, and fair fields of Troy,
 And you my honour'd parents, O! farewell!
 'Tis the last word Ajax shall speak on earth:
 The rest be utter'd to the shades below.

[AJAX falls on his sword and dies.]

S C E N E II.

C H O R U S.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

Labour on labour! toil on toil! O whither
 Have we not wander'd? yet no place informs us
 Where Ajax is: but soft, I hear a voice.

S E M I C H O R U S II.

'Twas ours, your friends.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

What news?

S E M I C H O R U S II.

We've search'd along

The western shore.

S E M I C H O R U S I.

And is he found?

S E M I C H O R U S II.

Alas!

We met with nought but toil; no fight of him.

S E M I-

The Chorus who had been in search of Ajax enter at different parts of the stage, having divided themselves into two parts, the better to discover him; they meet as it were by chance, and ask each other concerning him.

SEMICHORUS I.

We from the east return with like success;
For none have seen or heard of him that way.

SEMICHORUS II.

Who will inform us? who will say
Where cruel Ajax bent his way?

Will not the watchful hind, who void of sleep
Hangs laborious o'er the deep?

From high Olympus will no pitying god
Will no kind Naiad of the flood,

If chance they see the cruel Ajax stray,
Tell us where he bent his way?

For O! 'tis dreadful, weary'd thus, to rove,
Whilst all our pains successful prove

To reach the destin'd goal, or find the man we love.
[from within.

TECMESSA.

Alas! alas!

SEMICHORUS I.

Hark! from the neighb'ring grove
I heard a voice.

SEMICHORUS II.

It is the wretched captive,
The wife of Ajax, the poor sad Tecmessa.

SCENE III.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

O! I am lost, my Friends, undone, destroy'd!

CHO-

O! I am lost, &c. Tecmessa, as well as the Chorus, alarm'd by the prophecy of Chalcas as recounted by the messenger, had been in search of her husband, and on her return stumbles on his Body;
the

CHORUS.

Ha! what hath happen'd?

TECMESSA.

Ajax lies before me,
Slain by the sword which he had bury'd here.

CHORUS.

Fatal sure was our return,
Thy untimely death to mourn,
Me, and all thy faithful train,
Cruel Ajax, hast thou slain,
Sad event alas! to me!
Sadder, woman, still to thee.

TECMESSA.

O! I have reason now to weep indeed.

CHORUS.

What hand perform'd the horrid deed?

TECMESSA.

His own,

Doubtless it was, the sword he fell upon,
Here, fix'd in earth, declares it must be so.

[Approaching towards the Body.]

CHORUS.

Alone without one pitying Friend,
Cam'st thou to this dreadful end;
Was I not myself to blame,
Who neglectful never came?
Bring him, Tecmessa, to my eyes,
Tell me, where thy Ajax lies.

TEC-

the Chorus, we must suppose, are at the forepart of the stage, and Tecmessa at the back, in the place where Ajax had fall'n upon his sword. The Chorus here, agreeable to what I have before observed was customary in the impassion'd parts of the drama, sing in strophe and antistrophe: I have therefore put it into rhyme, the better to distinguish it.

TECMESSA.

He is not to be seen ; this folded garment
 Shall hide the horrid sight : a sight no friend
 Wou'd wish to see : whilst from his nostrils streams
 The black blood, more still issuing from the wound,
 Made by his own destructive hand : O me !
 What must I do ? what friend will raise him up ?
 O ! where is Teucer ? he shou'd have been here
 To pay his last sad duty to a brother :
 O ! wretched Ajax ! but to think, alas !
 What once thou hast been, and what now thou art,
 Thy very foes must sure lament thy fate.

CHORUS.

Ajax, long since in thy obdurate mind,
 Thy sad purpose was design'd ;
 Long since wert thou resolv'd to seek repose
 From thy never ceasing woes ;
 This from the daily sigh, the nightly tear,
 This from thy sorrows did I fear ;
 This from thy hate which nought cou'd e'er assuage ;
 And 'gainst th' Atridæ all thy rage :
 For never did thy soul contentment know,
 But still with fiercest indignation glow,
 Since great Achilles' arms were given to thy foe.

TECMESSA.

O ! me !

CHORUS.

Alas ! I know the wound must pierce
 Thy inmost soul.

TECMESSA.

Unhappy lost Tecmessa !

CH O-

CHORUS.

O! I believe thou art indeed unhappy,
Bereav'd of such a friend.

TECMESSA.

Thou but believ'st it,
I am too certain; for I feel it here.

CHORUS.

I know thou dost.

TECMESSA.

What servitude, my child,
Must we endure? who will protect us now?

CHORUS.

Doubtless thy fear of future pain,
From the Atridæ all are vain,
For never can they mean such ills to thee;
Unfeeling they of human woe,
Nor love nor piety cou'd know;
May heav'n avert the sad calamity!

TECMESSA.

The gods ordain'd it, and it must be so.

CHORUS.

But he hath suffer'd more than he deserv'd.

TECMESSA.

Jove's dreadful daughter Pallas so decreed
His fate, to gratify her lov'd Ulysses.

CHORUS.

Ulysses, ever pleas'd to see
His madness, now will smile at thee,
Will laugh at Ajax' woes, nor pity thine:
By him the curs'd Atridæ led,
Perhaps will triumph o'er the dead,
And in the cruel mirth with pleasure join.

T E C M E S S A.

Let them rejoice, let them insult him now
 With savage joy, but when the dreadful day
 Of battle comes, whom living they despis'd,
 When dead they shall lament: fools never know
 The treasure's value, till the treasure's lost:
 But far more bitter was his death to me
 Than sweet to them: to Ajax 'twas most welcome;
 Death was his only wish, and he obtain'd it:
 'Then wherefore shou'd they triumph? by the hand
 Of heav'n, and not by theirs my Ajax fell.
 Then let Ulysses smile: he is not theirs,
 He lives not for the Grecians; he is gone,
 And has bequeath'd his sorrows all to me.

S C E N E IV.

TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Alas! alas!

CHORUS.

Hark! 'tis the voice of Teucer

In mournful sighs lamenting our sad fate.

TEUCER.

O! Ajax, is it so? my dearest brother,
 Dear as these eyes to me, hath fame said true,
 And art thou gone?

CHORUS.

O! Teucer, he is dead.

TEUCER.

Unhappy fate!

CHORUS.

'Tis so indeed.

TEU-

TEUCER.

Alas!

Wretch that I am.

CHORUS.

O! thou hast cause to weep.

TEUCER.

Dreadful calamity!

CHORUS.

It is indeed

Too much to bear.

TEUCER.

O! wretched, wretched Teucer!

Where is the child? is he at Troy?

CHORUS.

Alone

And in the tent.

TEUCER.

Will ye not bring him to me,

Left he shou'd fall a victim to the foe?

Ev'n as the hunters seize the lion's whelp

Left to its helpless dam: quick! fly! assist me,

For all are glad to triumph o'er the dead.

CHORUS.

To thee, O! Teucer, he bequeath'd the care

Of his lov'd child, and thou obey'ft him well.

TEUCER.

O Ajax! never did these eyes behold

A sight so dreadful; came I then for this

With luckless speed? O! melancholy journey!

To seek thee long in vain, and thus at last

To find thee dead before me, O! my brother!

Quick through the Grecian host, as if some god

Had brought the tidings, spread the dire report

E

Of

Of thy untimely fate ; far from thee then
I heard and wept, but now, alas ! I see
And am undone ; my best, my dearest Ajax !
Unveil the body ; let me view it well,
And count my mis'ries ; horrid spectacle !
O ! rash advent'rous deed ! what weight of woe
Thy death has laid on me ! alas ! to whom
Or whither shall I go ? O ! wherefore, Teucer,
Wert thou not here to stop a brother's hand ?
What will our poor unhappy father say,
The wretched Telamon, will he receive me
With looks of love and pleasure, when I come
Without his Ajax ? O ! he never will.
Ev'n in the best of times he was not wont
To smile, or joy in aught. What then will now
His anger vent ? will he not speak of me
As of a faithless base unworthy son,
The spurious offspring of a captive mother,
Who hath betray'd and slain his best-lov'd Ajax
To gain his fair possessions after death ?
Thus will his wrath, sharpen'd by peevish age,
Upbraid me guiltless ; and to slav'ry doom'd
A wretched exile from his native land
Shall Teucer wander forth : such dreadful ills
Must I expect at home : at Troy, my foes
Are num'rous, and my friends alas how few !
Thou art the cause of all : for O ! my Ajax,
What shall I do ? how can I save thee now
From this sad fate ? O ! who could have foreseen
That Hector, long since dead, at last should prove
The murderer of Ajax ? By the gods
I do beseech you, mark the fate of both :
The belt, which Ajax did to Hector give,

Dragg'd

Dragg'd the brave Trojan o'er the bloody field
 Till he expir'd ; and now, behold ! the sword,
 Which Hector gave to Ajax, is the cause
 Of Ajax' death : Erynnis' self did forge
 The fatal steel, and Pluto made the belt ;
 Dreadful artificer ! But this, and all
 That happens to us, is the work of heav'n.
 If there be those who doubt it, let them hold
 Their diff'ring judgments, I shall keep my own.

CHORUS.

Teucer, no more ; but rather now prepare
 To bury Ajax, and defend thy self
 Against thy foe, whom yonder I behold
 This way advancing, with malignant smile,
 And looks of ill intent.

TEUCER.

Who can it be ?
 From th' army, think'st thou ?

CHORUS.

'Tis the man whose cause
 We came to fight, ev'n Menelaus.

TEUCER.

'Tis so.
 As he approaches nigh, I know him well.

S C E N E V.

MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

MENELAUS.

Stop there ; to thee I speak ; let go the body,
 I will not have it touch'd.

TEUCER.

Why touch it not ?

MENE LAUS.

Because it is my will, and his who leads
The Grecian host.

TEUCER.

But wherefore is it so!

MENE LAUS.

Greece fondly hoped that she had brought a friend,
And firm ally, but by experience found
That Troy herself was not so much our foe
As Ajax was, who nightly wander'd forth
With deadliest rage to murder all our host,
And, but some god did frustrate his intent,
The fate himself hath met had been our own;
Then had he triumph'd; but the gods ordain'd
It shou'd not be; and 'gainst the flocks and herds
Turn'd all his fury: wherefore, know, there lives not
A man of courage or of pow'r sufficient
To bury Ajax: on the yellow shore
He shall be cast, to be the food of birds
That wander there: thou may'st resent it too,
But 'twill be vain; at least we will command
When dead, whom living we cou'd ne'er subdue,
Nor ask thy leave: he never wou'd submit,
But now he must: yield therefore, or we force thee.
'Tis the Plebeian's duty to obey
The voice of those who bear authority,
And he who doth not is the worst of men;
For never can the state itself support
By wholesome laws, where there is no submission:
An army's best defence is modest fear
And rev'rence of its leaders, without these
It cannot conquer: it becomes a man
How great soe'er his strength, still to remember

-THEM

A little,

A little, very little, may destroy him.
 He who is guarded by humility
 And conscious shame, alone in safety lies;
 But where licentious freedom and reproach
 Injurious reign, each as his will directs
 Still acting, know, that city soon must fall
 From all its bliss, and sink in deepest woe.
 Remember then, respect is due to me.
 Let us not think when pleasure is enjoy'd
 We must not suffer too and taste of pain;
 For these to mortals still alternate rise.
 There liv'd not one so proud and arrogant
 As Ajax was: I will be haughty now;
 It is my turn: take heed then, touch him not,
 Lest, while thou striv'st to bury him, thyself
 Shou'd drop into the tomb.

C H O R U S.

O! Menelaus,

Do not with maxims grave, and wisdom's rules
 Mix foul reproach and slander on the dead.

T E U C E R.

It shou'd not move our wonder, O! my friend,
 To see the vulgar err, of meaner souls,
 And birth obscure, when men so nobly born.
 Will talk thus basely: tell me, Menelaus,
 For 'twas thy first assertion, didst thou bring
 Our Ajax here to help the Grecian host,
 Or came he hither by himself alone
 Conducted? whence is thy command o'er him,
 Or these his followers? who gave thee pow'r,
 Who gave thee right? thou may'st be Sparta's king,
 But art not ours: Ajax was bound by law
 No more to thee than thou wert bound to Ajax;

Thyself no gen'ral, but to others here.
 Subjected, therefore lord it where thou may'st ;
 Command thy slaves, go threaten, and chastise them ;
 But I will bury Ajax, spite of thee,
 And of thy brother, for I heed thee not :
 He sail'd not here to quarrel for the wife
 Of Menelaus, like a hireling slave,
 But to fulfill the strictly-binding oath
 Which he had sworn ; he did not come for thee ;
 For he despis'd so poor a cause ; he came
 With all his heralds, and a num'rous train,
 And brought his captains too ; remember therefore
 Thy clamours ne'er shall turn me from my purpose
 Whilst thou art what thou art.

MENELAUS.

A tongue like thine

But ill becomes thy state : 'tis most unseemly.

TEUCER.

A keen reproach with justice on its side

Is always grating.

MENELAUS.

This proud archer here

Talks loudly.

TEU-

Strictly-binding oath, &c. Tyndarus, the father of the fair Helen, obliged all his daughter's lovers to take an oath, that on which of them soever the happy lot should fall to marry her, the rest should unite in his defence, and, in case of any attempt to carry her off, should join their forces to recover her. The event justify'd the necessity of this oath. Teucer therefore tells Menelaus, that it was not any personal regard to him which induced Ajax to join the army, but his resolution to fulfil this solemn engagement.

This proud archer, &c. The foot-soldiers among the Grecians, were divided into the *ψιλοι* and the *επιπαιτες*. The *επιπαιτες* or armed

A J A X.

55

TEUCER.

'Tis no mean illib'ral art.

MENELAUS.

If thou could'st bear a shield, how insolent
And haughty woud'st thou be! when naked thus,
Thou boast'st thy valour.

TEUCER.

Naked as I am

I shou'd not fly from thee with all thy arms.

MENELAUS.

Thy tongue but speaks thy pride.

TEUCER.

I shou'd be proud

When I am just.

MENELAUS.

Doth justice bid me love

Him who destroy'd me?

TEUCER.

Art thou then destroy'd?

That's strange indeed, living and dead at once.

MENELAUS.

For him I had been so: the gods preserv'd me.

E 4

TEU-

armed soldiers, bore heavy armour, engaging with broad shields, and long spears: Whereas the $\psi\lambda\omicron\iota$ or light armed men fought with arrows, and darts, or sometimes stones and slings, annoying their enemies at a distance, like our modern Indians, but unfit for close fight: these, to which Teucer belonged, were inferior in honour and dignity to the heavy-armed soldiers; Menelaus therefore reproaches him as a man of no rank, alluding probably to the custom among the $\psi\lambda\omicron\iota$ of shooting their arrows, and then retiring behind the shields of the heavy-armed for protection. Homer, whom Sophocles never loses sight of, describes Teucer acting in this manner. See the 8th book of the Iliad,

TEUCER.

Do not dishonour then the pow'rs divine
That fav'd thee.

MENE LAUS.

Do I violate their laws?

TEUCER.

If thou forbid'st the burial of the dead
Thou dost offend the gods.

MENE LAUS.

He was my foe,

And therefore I forbid it.

TEUCER.

Art thou sure

That Ajax ever was thy foe?

MENE LAUS.

I am:

Our hate was mutual, and thou know'st the cause.

TEUCER.

Becausè thou wert corrupted, thy false voice
Condemn'd him.

MENE LAUS.

'Twas the judges' fault, not mine.

TEUCER.

Thus may'st thou screen a thousand injuries.

MENE LAUS.

Some one may suffer for this insolence.

TEUCER.

Not more perhaps than others.

MENE-

Thy false voice, &c. The Scholiasts on this place inform us, that in the famous contest between Ajax and Ulysses for the arms of Achilles, the former lost them by the casting vote of Menelaus.

M E N E L A U S.

This alone

Remember, bury'd he shall never be.

T E U C E R.

Do thou remember too, I say, he shall.

M E N E L A U S.

So have I seen a bold imperious man
 With froward tongue, before the storm began,
 Urging the tardy mariner to sail,
 But when the tempest rose, no more was heard
 The coward's voice, but wrapt beneath his cloak
 Silent he laid, and suffer'd ev'ry foot
 To trample on him; thus it is with thee,
 And thy foul tongue: forth from a little cloud
 Soon as the storm shall burst, it will o'erwhelm thee,
 And stop thy clamours.

T E U C E R.

I too have beheld

A man with folly swol'n reproach his friends
 Oppress'd with fore calamity, when strait
 One came like me, with indignation fir'd,
 Saw, and address'd him thus, "cease, shameless wretch,
 "Nor thus oppress the dead; for, if thou dost,
 "Remember thou shalt suffer for thy crime:"
 Thus spake he to the weak insulting fool;

Methinks

Weak insulting fool, &c. There is something in the raillery of this scene which will probably appear very rough, when compared with the refinement of modern manners: The heroes of Sophocles, like those of Homer, are not remarkable for their delicacy. "Il faut convenir (says Brumoy) que les heros Grecs se traitent un peu à la Grecque, c'est à-dire, assez incivilement; mais telle étoit la maniere d'une nation d'ailleurs si polie; cela n'est pas pour nous plaire aujourd'hui."

Methinks I see him here; it must be he,
E'en Menelaus; have I guess'd aright?

MENELAUS.

'Tis well; I'll leave thee: 'tis a folly thus
To talk with those whom we have pow'r to punish.

[Exit.

S C E N E VI.

TEUCER, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Away, this babler is not to be borne.

CHORUS.

The contest will grow warm: O! Teucer, haste,
Prepare some hollow foils for the remains
Of Ajax, raise him there a monument,
By after ages ne'er to be forgotten.

TEUCER.

And, lo! in happy hour this way advancing
The wife and son of our unhappy friend,
To pay due honours, and adorn his tomb.

S C E N E VII.

TECMESSA, EURYSACES,

TEUCER, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Come hither, boy, bend down and touch thy father;
There sit, and holding in thy hands this hair

And

Holding in thy hands, &c. It was customary among the Grecians on the death of friends or relations to tear and cut off their hair to throw it on the dead body, or sometimes into the funeral-pile, with a design to render the ghost of the deceased person propitious, as well as to shew their grief for the loss of him: we find Electra performing this ceremony in honour of Orestes whom she supposed dead.

And hers and thine, the suppliant's humble treasure,
 Offer thy pious prayers for thy dead father:
 If from yon hostile camp the foe shou'd come
 To drive thee hence, far from his native land,
 Whoe'er he be, unbury'd may he lye,
 From his whole race uprooted, torn away,
 Ev'n as this hair which here I cut before thee;
 O! guard it well, my child, and you my friends,
 Behave like men, assist, protect him now,
 Till I return, and, spite of all our foes,
 Perform the rites, and raise a tomb to Ajax.

Exit.

SCENE VIII.

TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When will the happy hour appear,
 That comes to calm our ev'ry fear,
 From endless toil to bring us sweet repose,
 To bid our weary wandrings cease,
 To fold us in the arms of peace,
 And put the wish'd-for period to our woes?
 For since the day when first to Troy we came,
 Nought have we known but grief, reproach, and shame.

ANTI-

Scene VIII. Menelaus goes out with an intention, we must suppose, to bring back with him a proper force to secure the execution of his orders which Teucer had treated with contempt; Teucer retires to find out a proper place for the interment of Ajax, and leaves Tecmessa and Eurysaces weeping over the body: the Chorus sings a pathetic dirge, lamenting the miseries of war, and their own unhappy condition.

A N T I S T R O P H E I.

O! that the man, who erst inspir'd
 With horrid rage, our Grecians fir'd
 To slaught'rous deeds, and taught them first to fight,
 E'er he had learn'd the dreadful trade,
 Himself had mingled with the dead,
 Or scatter'd wide in air, or sunk in endless night!
 For O! from war unnumber'd evils flow,
 The inexhausted source of ev'ry human woe.

S T R O P H E II.

By war disturb'd the genial board
 No longer will its sweets afford;
 Their fragrant odours round my head
 The verdant wreaths no longer spread;
 Nor music's charms my soul delight,
 Nor love with rapture crowns the night;
 No love alas! for me, but grief and care;
 For when I think of Troy I still despair,
 And wet with many a tear my wild dishevell'd hair

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Nor nightly fear nor hostile dart
 Whilst Ajax liv'd, appall'd my heart,
 But all our pleasures now are o'er,
 The valiant Ajax is no more;
 O cou'd I climb the woody steep
 That hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
 From Sunium's cliff by waves for ever beat!
 Thence shou'd my eye the lovely prospect greet,
 And smile on sacred Athens rising at my feet.

A C T V.

SCENE I.

TEUCER, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

THIS way I bent my hasty steps to meet
 The Grecian chief, who hither comes prepar'd
 To vent his keen reproaches.

AGAMEMNON.

I am told

That thou, ev'n thou, the son of a vile slave,
 Hast dar'd to utter foulest calumny
 Against thy prince, and pass'd unpunish'd for it;
 Mean as thy birth is, what had been thy pride
 And high demeanor, had thy mother sprung
 From noble blood? barbarian as thou art,
 How could'st thou praise a wretch who like thyself
 Was nothing? we, it seems, for thou hast sworn it,
 Are not the masters or of Greece or thee;
 Ajax alone, thou say'st, was leader here.
 Shall we be thus insulted by our slaves?
 Who is this boaster? and what mighty deed
 Hath he perform'd which I cou'd not have done?
 Is there no Hero in the Grecian host
 But Ajax? Vain indeed were our resolves
 In the warm contest for Achilles' arms,
 If Teucer yet shall question the decree,
 Against the gen'ral voice; resisting still,
 And still reproachful, with delusive arts
 Tho' conquer'd, yet opposing: wholesome laws
 Will nought avail, if those whom justice deems
 Superior, to the vanquish'd must resign,

And

And first in virtue be the last in fame ;
 It must not be ; not always the huge size
 Of weighty limbs ensures the victory ;
 They who excel in wisdom are alone
 Invincible : thou seest the brawny ox
 How the small whip will drive him thro' the field ;
 What if the med'cine be apply'd to thee
 For thy proud boasting, and licentious tongue !
 'Twill be thy portion soon, unless thou learn'st
 More wisdom ; henceforth, mindful what thou art,
 Bring with thee one of nobler blood to plead
 Thy cause ; for know, the language which thou talk'st
 Is barb'rous, and I understand thee not.

C H O R U S.

I can but wish that wisdom may attend
 To guide you both.

T E U C E R.

Alas ! how very soon
 Are all the merits of the dead forgotten !
 O ! Ajax, is the memory of thee
 Already lost, ev'n by the man for whom
 Thy life so oft was ventur'd in the field ?
 But now 'tis past, and buried in oblivion :
 Thou wordy stand'rer ! can'st thou not remember
 When baffled and unequal to the foe
 Close pent within the walls our forces lay,
 Can'st thou not call to mind who came alone
 To your deliv'rance, when devouring flames
 Tow'r'd o'er our ships, when Hector leap'd the foss
 And rush'd amongst us ? then who fought for Greece,
 Who drove him back but Ajax, who, thou say'st,
 Cou'd never fight ? did he not fight for you ?
 He met the noble Hector hand to hand,

Unbidden

Unbidden dared the fortune of the field;
 He scorn'd the coward's art to fix his lot
 In the moist earth; forth from the crested helmet
 It sprang the first: such were the deeds of Ajax,
 And I was witness of them; I, the slave,
 For so thou call'st me, sprung from a barbarian:
 How dares a wretch like thee to talk of birth!
 Who was thy grandfire? can'st thou not remember
 That old barbarian, Phrygian Pelops, tell me
 Who was thy father, Atreus, was he not?
 That worst of men, who at a brother's table
 Serv'd up his children, horrible repast!
 Thy mother too a Cretan, and a slave;
 A vile adulteress, whom thy father caught
 And head-long cast into the sea: shalt thou
 Talk then to me of birth, to me, the son
 Of valiant Telamon, renown'd in war,
 And wedded to a queen, the royal race
 Of great Laomedon, and fairest gift
 Of fam'd Alcides? thus of noble blood
 From either parent sprung, shall I disgrace
 The man whom thou inhuman wou'dst still keep
 Unbury'd here? dost thou not blush to think on't?
 But, mark me well; if thou dost cast him forth,
 Not he alone inglorious on the plains
 Shall lye, together we will perish all:
 To die with glory in a brother's cause
 Is better far than fighting for the wife
 Of Agamemnon, or of Menelaus:
 For thy own sake, and not for mine, remember
 If thou provoke me, thou'lt be sorry for it,
 And wish'd thou'dst rather fear'd than anger'd Teucer.

S C E N E II.

ULYSSES, AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS,
TEUCER, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Ulysses, if thou mean'st not to inflame,
But to compose this dreadful strife, thou com'st
In happiest hour.

U L Y S S E S.

Far off I heard the voice
Of the Atridæ o'er this wretched corse;
Whence rose the clamour, friends?

M E N E L A U S.

With bitt'rest words
This Teucer here, Ulysses, has revil'd me.

U L Y S S E S.

What words? for if he heard the same from thee,
I blame him not.

A G A M E M N O N.

He did provoke me to it.

U L Y S S E S.

What inj'ry hath he done thee?

A G A M E M N O N.

He declares

The body shall have sepulture, himself
Perforce will bury Ajax, spite of me,
And of my pow'r.

U L Y S S E S.

Shall I be free, and speak
The truth to thee without reproach or blame?

A G A M E M N O N.

Thou mayst; for well thou know'st I hold Ulysses
Of all the Greeks my best and dearest friend.

U L Y S.

U L Y S S E S.

Then hear me, by the gods I must intreat thee,
 Do not, remorseless and inhuman, cast
 The body forth unbury'd, nor permit
 Authority to trample thus on justice.
 E'er since our contest for Achilles' arms,
 Hath Ajax been my foe, and yet I scorn
 To use him basely; ev'n Ulysses owns
 Of all the Grecian chiefs who came to Troy
 (Except Achilles) Ajax was the bravest.
 Do not deny him then the honours due
 To worth so great; for know, it were a crime
 Not against him alone but 'gainst the gods,
 A violation of the laws divine.
 To hurt the brave and virtuous after death,
 Ev'n tho' he liv'd thy foe, is infamous.

A G A M E M N O N.

Plead'st thou for Ajax?

U L Y S S E S.

Yes; I was his foe
 Whilst justice wou'd permit me; but he's dead;
 Therefore thou shoud'st not triumph, nor rejoice
 With mirth unseemly o'er a vanquish'd man.

A G A M E M N O N.

'Tis not so easy for a king to act
 By honour's strictest rules.

U L Y S S E S.

'Tis always so,
 To hearken to the counsels of a friend,
 When he advises well.

A G A M E M N O N.

But know, the good
 And virtuous still submit to those who rule.

F

U L Y S.

U L Y S S E S.

No more: when thou art vanquish'd by thy friends,
Thou art thyself the conqu'ror.

A G A M E M N O N.

Still remember

For whom thou plead'st, Ulysses.

U L Y S S E S.

For a foe,

But for a brave one.

A G A M E M N O N.

Dost thou thus revere

Ev'n after death thy enemy?

U L Y S S E S.

I do:

Virtue is dearer to me than revenge.

A G A M E M N O N.

Such men are most unstable in their ways.

U L Y S S E S.

Our dearest friend may one day be our foe.

A G A M E M N O N.

Dost thou desire such friends?

U L Y S S E S.

I cannot love

Or praise th' unfeeling heart.

A G A M E M N O N.

This day shall Greece

Mark us for cowards.

U L Y S S E S.

Greece will call us just:

A G A M E M N O N.

Woud'st thou persuade me then to grant him burial?

U L Y S S E S.

I wou'd, and for that purpose came I hither.

A G A-

A G A M E M N O N.

How ev'ry man consults his own advantage,
And acts but for himself!

U L Y S S E S.

And who is he
Whom I shou'd wish to serve before Ulysses?

A G A M E M N O N.

'Tis thy own work, remember, and not mine.

U L Y S S E S.

The deed will win thee praise, and ev'ry tongue
Shall call thee good.

A G A M E M N O N.

Thou know'st I'd not refuse
Ulysses more, much more than this; but Ajax
Or bury'd or unbury'd is the same,
And must be hateful still to Agamemnon;
But do as it beseems thee best.

C H O R U S.

Ulysses,
The man who says thou art not wise and good
Is senseless and unjust.

U L Y S S E S.

I tell thee, Teucer,
Henceforth I am as much the friend of Ajax
As once I was his foe: ev'n now I mean
To join with thee, a fellow-labourer
In all the pious offices of love,
Nor wou'd omit, what ev'ry man shou'd pay
The honours due to such exalted virtue!

T E U C E R.

O! best of men, thou hast my thanks and praise,
And well deserv'st them, for thou hast transcended
My utmost hopes, I little thought the worst

Of all his foes among the Grecian host
 Wou'd thus alone defend, alone protect
 The dead from insult, when these thund'ring leaders
 United came, to cast his body forth
 With infamy; but may the god who rules,
 O'er high Olympus, and the vengeful furies,
 Daughters of Jove, the guilt-rewarding sisters,
 With all-deciding justice soon repay
 The haughty tyrants: for thy offer'd aid,
 Son of Laertes, in the fun'ral rites,
 Perhaps it might offend the honour'd shade
 Of our dead friend, it cannot be accepted;
 For all beside we thank thee: if thou wilt
 To send assistance from the Grecian camp,
 'Twill be receiv'd; the rest shall be my care.
 Thou hast perform'd the duty of a friend,
 And we acknowledge it.

U L Y S S E S.

I wou'd have lent
 My willing aid, but since it must not be,
 I shall submit; farewell.

[Exit Ulysses.]

S C E N E III.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, TEUCER,
 EURYSACES, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Thus far is right;
 The time already past doth chide our sloth;
 My friends, be vigilant; let some prepare
 The hollow fofs, some o'er the sacred flame
 Place the rich tripod for the fun'ral bath;
 Forth from the camp a chosen band must bear

His

His glitt'ring arms, and trophies of the war.
Do thou, my child, if thou hast strength, uplift

[to Euryfaces.]

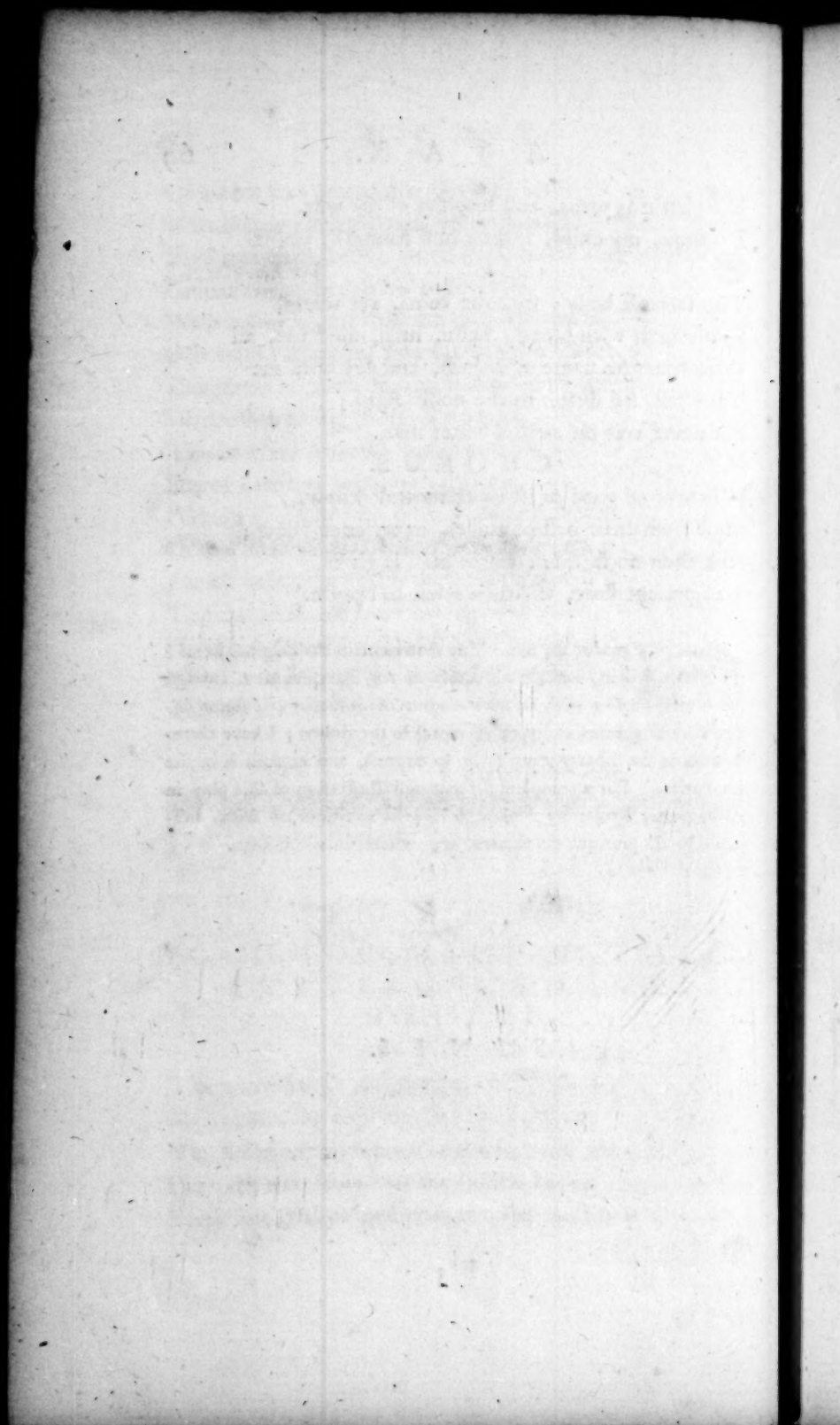
Thy father's body; see, the veins, yet warm,
Spout forth with blood; haste, help, assist me, all
Who bear the name of friends, and pay with me
Your last sad duties to the noble Ajax;
For never was on earth a better man.

CHORUS.

Whate'er of good or ill weak mortals know,
Must from their best of guides, experience, flow;
Seek then no farther; for to man is giv'n
The present state, the future left to heav'n.

Whate'er of good or ill, &c. The sentiment in the original is, if I am not mistaken, exactly agreeable to my interpretation, though the Greek carries with it some degree of obscurity; it seems design'd by Sophocles as a kind of moral to the drama; I have therefore taken the liberty more fully to express, and explain it in the translation. For a complete defence and illustration of this play in all its parts, I refer my readers to Hedelin's critique on Ajax, subjoin'd to his *pratique du theatre*, or, whole art of the stage.

F I N I S.





E L E C T R A.



Dramatis Personæ.

ELECTRA, daughter of **AGAMEMNON** and
CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ORESTES, brother of **ELECTRA**.

PYLADES, friend of **ORESTES**.

GOVERNOR of **ORESTES**.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, wife to **ÆGISTHUS**.

CHRYSOthemis, sister of **ELECTRA**.

ÆGISTHUS, king of Argos and Mycenæ.

CHORUS,

Composed of the principal **LADIES** of **MYCENÆ**.

SCENE, **MYCENÆ** before the palace of **ÆGISTHUS**.

E L E C T R A.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

O R E S T E S, P Y L A D E S.

G O V E R N O R of O R E S T E S.

G O V E R N O R.

O Son of great Atrides, he who led
 Embattled Greece to Troy's devoted walls,
 At length behold what thy desiring eyes
 So long have sought ; behold thy native soil,
 Thy much-lov'd Argos, and the hallow'd grove
 Of Io, frantic maid : on this side lies

The

The scene lies just before the gates of the palace of Ægisthus ; on the back part of it is represented a view of the two cities of Argos and Mycenæ, the temple of Juno, and the grove of Io, which must altogether have made a noble and magnificent appearance, as the Greeks spared no expence in the decorations of their theatre. The place of action, the persons, with the whole view and subject of the piece, are pointed out to us, in the first scene, with that accuracy, plainness and simplicity, for which Sophocles is so eminently distinguish'd.

The hallow'd grove of Io. Io, the daughter of Inachus, who was transform'd into a heifer by Jupiter to conceal her from the rage of Juno, who discover'd and placed her under the guardianship of Argus. She afterwards sent a gad-fly to sting her into madness. The story is told in the first book of Ovid's *Metamorph.*

The Lycian forum, on the left the fane
 Of Juno far renown'd : behold ! we come
 To rich Mycenæ, and the slaught'rous house
 Of Pelops' hapless race, from whose sad walls
 Long since I bore thee, at thy sisters hand
 Gladly receiv'd, and with paternal care
 To this blest day have foster'd up thy youth,
 Till riper years shou'd give thee to return,
 And pay with dire revenge thy father's murder.
 Now, my Orestes, and thou dear companion
 Of all our sufferings, much-lov'd Pylades,
 Let deepest counsel sway our just resolves,
 For lo ! resplendent Phœbus with his light
 Calls up the chearful birds to early song,
 And gloomy night hath lost her starry train :
 Come then, my friends, and e'er th' awaken'd city
 Pours forth her busy throngs, this instant here
 Let us consult ; believe me, 'tis no time
 For dull delay ; 'tis the decisive hour,
 And this the very crisis of our fate.

O R E S T E S.

What proofs thou giv'st me of the noblest nature
 And true benevolence, thou good old man !

Of

The Lycian forum. A place sacred to Apollo ΛΥΚΙΟΣ or ΛΥΚΟΚΤΟΡΟΣ the wolf-slayer, so call'd from his killing wolves when under the disguise of a shepherd to Admetus.

The fane of Juno. Between Argos and Mycenæ, which are often mistaken by the tragic poets for the same city, was placed the magnificent temple of Juno. Before the time of Agamemnon they had each a distinct sovereign : he first united and ruled over them both.

The slaught'rous house of Pelops. A family which furnish'd ample matter for the tragic poets. The stories, here alluded to, of Tantalus, Pelops, Thyestes, Agamemnon, &c. are too well known to need any illustration.

Of servants sure the faithfulest and best
 That ever bore the name : the gen'rous steed,
 Tho' worn with years, thus keeps his wonted courage,
 And warns his master of approaching danger ;
 Like him thou stirr'st me up to noble deeds,
 And follow'st me undaunted : but attend
 To what I have resolv'd, and if I err,
 Let thy superior judgment set me right.

When to the delphic oracle I flew,
 Eager to know how on my father's foes
 I best might satiate my revenge, the god
 Enjoin'd me not by force or open arms
 To rush upon them, but with guileful arts
 And silent well-conducted fraud betray them.
 Such was his will ; thou therefore, soon as time
 Shall lend thee opportunity, unknown
 And unsuspected (as thy absence hence
 For so long space and hoary age shall make thee)
 Must steal upon them, learn their secret counsels,
 As soon thou may'st, and quick inform us of them ;
 Say thou'rt of Phocis, from Phanoteus sent
 By one who is their friend and firm ally ;
 Say, and confirm it with a solemn oath
 Orestes is no more, by a rude shock
 Thrown from his chariot at the Pythian games ;

Be

From Phanoteus sent, &c. Phanoteus was a small midland town of Phocis, a city of Greece, famous for the Oracle of Delphos : according to Strabo it was formerly call'd Panope.

At the Pythian games, &c. The games here mention'd, and which are described in the second act, were not instituted till five hundred years after the death of Orestes ; Sophocles therefore is found guilty by the critics of a flagrant anachronism in this place. Mr. Brumoy however endeavours to defend him by observing that
 though

Be this thy tale; mean time (for thus the god
 His will divine express'd) my father's tomb
 With due libations and devoted hair
 Ourselves will crown; and thence returning bring
 From the dark covert where thou know'st 'twas hid,
 The brazen urn; there, we shall tell the tyrant,
 Thrice welcome news! Orestes' ashes lie.
 What shou'd deter me from the pious fraud?
 Since my feign'd death but gains me real fame,
 And I shall wake to better life: the deed,
 Which brings success and honour, must be good.
 Oft times the wisest and the best of men
 From death like this have rose with added greatness;
 Ev'n so thy friend to his deluded foes
 Shall soon return unlook'd for, and before them
 Shine like a star with more distinguish'd lustre.
 O! my lov'd country, and its guardian gods,
 Receive Orestes, and with happy omen
 Propitious smile, and thou, paternal seat,
 For lo! by heav'n's command I come to purge thee
 Of vile usurpers, and avenge thy wrongs;

Drive

though the latest *Æra* of their first celebration is dated at the 48th Olympiad, Apollo might nevertheless, immediately after the destruction of the Pytho, have himself instituted, something like the grand solemnity, which was many years afterwards heightened and improved by the public exhibition of these games under the influence of the civil power.

The pious fraud, &c. The Greeks, who were remarkably superstitious, entertained a notion, that to feign themselves dead, had something in it both wicked and dangerous; they were apprehensive that death would not be thus mock'd, but would revenge the fraud by coming upon them in reality. Orestes endeavours to shake off these fears, and to vindicate himself by the example of others who had done the same, and pass'd unpunished.

Drive me not from thee an abandon'd exile
 With infamy, but grant me to possess
 My father's throne, and fix his injur'd race.
 Thus far 'tis well : my faithful minister,
 Thou to thy office, we to ours with speed ;
 So time and opportunity require,
 On whom the fate of mortals must depend.

[from within.]

ELECTRA.

O misery !

GOVERNOR.

Methought a mournful voice

Spake from within.

ORESTES.

Perhaps the poor Electra,

Shall we not stay and hearken to it ?

GOVERNOR.

No:

First be Apollo's great behests obey'd
 Before thy father's tomb ; that pious deed
 Perform'd shall fire our souls with nobler warmth
 And crown our bold attempt with fair success.

[Exit.]

SCENE

First be Apollo's, &c. The meeting of Electra and Orestes in this place would apparently have spoiled the whole œconomy of the drama ; it is therefore artfully deferred by the poet, at the same time that the reason alledged by the old man gives us the most favourable idea of the piety of the antients. A brother has an opportunity of seeing and conversing with a sister whom he loved, and from whom he had been separated twenty years, but he foregoes it, in order previously to perform a religious duty. Christians may read and profit by the example.

SCENE II.

ELECTRA.

O! sacred light, and O! thou ambient air!
 Oft have ye heard Electra's loud laments,
 Her sighs, and groans, and witness'd to her woes,
 Which ever as each hateful morn appear'd
 I pour'd before you; what at eve retir'd
 I felt of anguish my sad couch alone
 Can tell, which water'd nightly with my tears
 Receiv'd me sorrowing; that best can tell
 What pangs I suffer'd for a hapless father,
 Whom not the god of war with ruthless hand
 Struck nob'y fighting in a distant soil,
 But my fell mother, and the curs'd Ægisthus,
 The part'ner of her bed, remorseless slew;
 Untimely didst thou fall, lamented shade,
 And none but poor Electra mourns thy fate;
 Nor shall she cease to mourn thee, while these eyes
 View the fair heavens, or behold the sun;
 Never, O! never! like the nightingale
 Whose plaintive song bewails her ravish'd brood;
 Here will I still lament my father's wrongs,
 And teach the echo to repeat my moan.
 O! ye infernal deities, and thou
 Terrestrial Hermes, and thou, Nemesis,

Replete

Like the nightingale, &c. Philomela, the daughter of Pandion, and sister of Procne the wife of Tereus. The poet, both in this and the following scene, takes the nightingale for Procne, as it was Procne and not Philomela who served up her son Itys to Tereus in revenge for the injury done to her sister. Æschylus, Euripides, and Aristophanes also suppose Procne to have been changed into a nightingale.

Replete with curses, and ye vengeful furies,
 Offspring of gods, the ministers of wrath
 To vile adult'ers, who with pity view
 The slaughter'd innocent, behold this deed!
 O! come, assist, revenge my father's murder;
 Quickly, O! quickly bring me my Orestes;
 For lo I sink beneath oppressive woe,
 And can no longer bear the weight alone.

SCENE III.

CHORUS, ELECTRA.

CHORUS.

O! wretched daughter of an impious mother!
 Wilt thou for ever mourn, for ever thus
 With unavailing tears, and endless sorrow
 Lament the royal Agamemnon's fate,
 By a vile woman's wicked arts betray'd?
 Perish the hand (forgive the pious curse,
 Ye heav'nly power's) that gave the deadly blow!

ELECTRA.

My noble friends, and partners in affliction,
 Who thus, to sooth my sorrows, kindly try
 Each art which love and friendship can inspire;
 Ye come to comfort me, I know ye do,
 I know my tears are fruitless all and vain;
 But O! permit me to indulge my griefs,
 For I must weep.

CHORUS.

Thy tears can ne'er recall him
 From the dark mansions of the common grave,
 No, nor thy pray'rs; they can but make thee wretched,
 And sink thee deeper in calamity;
 Why art thou then so fond of misery?

ELEC-

ELECTRA.

Devoid of sense and feeling is the heart
 That can forget an injur'd parent's wrongs.
 I love the airy messenger of Jove,
 The mournful bird that weeps her Itys' fate,
 And ev'ry night repeats the tender tale ;
 Thee too I rev'rence as a goddess, thee,
 Unhappy Niobe ! for still thou weep'st,
 And from the marble tears eternal flow.

CHORUS.

But O ! reflect, that not to thee alone
 Misfortune comes, that comes to all : behold
 Iphianassa, and Chrysothemis,
 And him who hides his grief, illustrious youth,
 The lov'd Orestes, these have suffer'd too.

ELECTRA.

Orestes ! yes, Mycenæ shall receive
 In happy hour her great avenger ; Jove
 With smiles auspicious shall conduct him to me ;
 For him alone I wait, for him, a wretch
 Despis'd, of children and of nuptial rites
 Hopeless I wander ; he remembers not
 What I have done for him, what suffer'd, still

With

Messenger of Jove. Procne, call'd the messenger of Jove, from her ushering in the spring. See the note on Philomela.

Unhappy Niobe. Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, and queen of Thebes ; feign'd by the poets to be turn'd into stone, after the death of her children. See Ovid's Met. Book VI.

Iphianassa and Chrysothemis. (Homer Il. Book IX.) mentions three daughters of Agamemnon, Chrysothemis, Laodice, and Iphianassa. Euripides takes no notice of any but Iphigenia, (who was sacrificed) and Electra. Possibly the Laodice of Homer is the Electra of Sophocles. The poets took the liberty of chang'g circumstances of this nature, not essential to the subject, as they thought proper.

With airy promises he mocks my hopes,
And yet he comes not to me.

CHORUS.

But he will.

Despair not, daughter ; Jove is yet in heav'n,
The god who sees, and knows, and governs all :
Patient to him submit, nor let thy rage
Too far transport thee, nor oblivion drown
The just remembrance of thy matchless woes ;
Time is a kind indulgent deity,
And he shall give thee succour, he shall send
The god of Acheron, from Chrysa's shores
To bring Orestes, and avenge thy wrongs.

ELECTRA.

O ! but the while how much of life is gone !
And I a hopeless wretched orphan still,
Without a friend to guard, or to protect me ;
Disgrac'd, dishonour'd, like a stranger clad
In base attire, and fed with homeliest fare.

CHORUS.

Sad news indeed the hapless messenger
To Argos brought, that spoke the wish'd return
Of thy lov'd father to his native soil ;
Fatal the night when Agamemnon fell
Or by a mortal or immortal hand ;
The work of fraud and lust, a horrid deed !

G

Whoe'er

From Chrysa's shores. Chrysa, or Chryssa, was a town of Phocis by the river side, of which Strophius, the father of Pylades, was king ; this was the place where Orestes was privately educated, and accounts for the so much celebrated friendship of the two princes.

The work of fraud and lust. Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra are said to have watch'd Agamemnon as he came out of the bath, when they

Whoe'er perform'd it.

ELECTRA.

O! detested feast!

O! day, the bitt'rest sure that ever rose!

With him I perish'd then; but may the gods

Repay the murth'ers; never may they hear

The voice of joy, or taste of comfort more!

CHORUS.

Cease thy complaints, already hast thou suffer'd

For thy loud discontents, and threat'ned vengeance.

'Tis folly to contend with pow'r superior.

ELECTRA.

Folly indeed, and madness! but my griefs

Will force their way, and whilst Electra breathes

She must lament; for who will bring me comfort,

Or sooth my sorrows? let me, let me go,

And weep for ever.

CHORUS.

'Tis my love intreats;

Trust me, I feel a mother's fondness for thee,

And fain wou'd save thee from redoubled woes.

And

they threw over his head a shirt without any opening at the neck, entangled in this they murder'd him; thus was the scheme laid by fraud and treachery, and executed by lust.

Whoe'er perform'd it. The Chorus seems fearful of attributing that crime to Clytæmnestra and Ægisthus, which they knew them guilty of, and to doubt whether they were at liberty to imprecate the divine vengeance on them for it. Dacier attributes this to the author's own idea of government, as requiring the implicit submission of subjects to their king, whether he was their lawful sovereign or an usurper. Perhaps a better reason for this diffidence may be assigned from the natural modesty of the sex, and the impiety of cursing those who had at least done no injury to them.

I feel a mother's fondness, &c. The Chorus is composed of the principal

ELECTRA.

And woud'st thou have me then neglect the dead?
 Forget my father? can there be such guilt?
 When I do so may infamy pursue me!
 And if I wed, may all the joys of love
 Be far remov'd! if vengeance doth not fall
 On crimes like these, for ever farewell justice,
 Shame, honour, truth and piety, farewell!

CHORUS.

Pardon me, daughter; if my warmth offend,
 Glad I submit; we'll follow, and obey thee.

ELECTRA.

I am myself to blame, and blush to think
 How much unfit I seem to bear the weight
 Impos'd upon me; but indeed 'tis great:
 Forgive me, friends, a woman born as I am,
 Must she not grieve to see each added minute
 Fraught with new mis'ries? thus to be a slave
 Ev'n in my father's house, and from those hands
 Which shed his blood to ask the means of life!
 Think what my soul must suffer to behold
 The curs'd Ægisthus seated on the throne
 Of Agamemnon, in the very robes
 Which once were his; to see the tyrant pour
 Libations forth ev'n on the fatal spot,
 Where the sad deed was done; but worst of all
 To see the murder'er usurp his bed,
 Embrace my mother, (by that honour'd name
 If I may call a guilty wretch like her)

G 2

Who

principal ladies of Mycenæ; the air of authority with which they address Electra, their calling her daughter, with other circumstances, make it most probable that, as Dacier has remark'd, they were not virgins, but matrons of rank and quality in the city.

Who pleas'd returns his love, and, of her crimes
 Unconscious, smiles, nor fears th' avenging furies,
 But ever as the bloody day returns
 Which gave the royal victim to her wiles,
 Annual the dance and choral song proclaim
 A solemn feast, nor impious sacrifice
 Forgets she then to her protecting gods.
 Shock'd at the cruel banquet I retire,
 And in some corner hide my griefs, deny'd
 Ev'n the sad comfort to indulge my sorrows;
 For Clytæmnestra in opprobrious terms
 Reviles me oft, "To thee alone, she cries,
 "Is Agamemnon lost, detested maid!
 "Think'st thou Electra only weeps his fate?
 "Perdition on thee! may th' infernal gods
 "Refuse thee succour, and protract thy pains!"
 Thus rails she bitter, and if chance she hear
 Orestes is approaching, stung with rage
 Wild she exclaims, "Thou art th' accursed cause,
 "This is thy deed, who stole Orestes from me,
 "And hid him from my rage; but be assur'd
 "E'er long my vengeance shall o'ertake thee for it!
 These threats her noble lord still urges on;
 That vile adult'rer, that abandon'd coward,
 Whose fearful soul call'd in a woman's aid
 To execute his bloody purposes.
 Mean-time Electra sighs for her Orestes,

Her

Proclaim a solemn feast. Nothing cou'd add more to the horror of the crime than such a circumstance. Clytæmnestra, not content with murdering her husband, institutes a solemn feast in commemoration of the happy event, and calls it, with cruel raillery, the supper of Agamemnon. Dinias, in his history of Argos, informs us it was on the 13th of the month Gamelion, which answers to the beginning of our January.

Her wish'd avenger; his unkind delay
 Destroys my hopes; alas! my gentle friends,
 Who can bear this, and keep an equal mind?
 To suffer ills like mine, and not to err
 From wild distraction, wou'd be strange indeed.

CHORUS.

But say, Electra, is the tyrant near?
 Or may we speak our thoughts unblam'd?

ELECTRA.

Thou may'st;
 I had not else beyond the palace dared
 To wander hither.

CHORUS.

I wou'd fain have ask'd thee-----

ELECTRA.

Ask what thou wilt, Ægisthus is far off.

CHORUS.

Touching thy brother then, inform me quick
 If aught thou know'st that merits firm belief.

ELECTRA.

He promises, but comes not.

CHORUS.

Things of moment
 Require deliberation and delay.

ELECTRA.

O! but did I delay to save Orestes?

CHORUS.

He boasts a noble nature, and will ne'er
 Forget his friends: be confident.

ELECTRA.

I am,

Were I not so I had not liv'd till now.

CHORUS.

But soft; behold the fair Chrysothemis
Advance this way, and in her hand she bears
Sepulchral off'rings to the shades below.

SCENE IV.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Still, my Electra, pouring forth thy griefs?
Art thou not yet by sad experience taught
How little they avail? I too must feel
And cou'd resent, as, were thy sister's pow'r
But equal to her will, our foes shou'd know.
Mean-time with lower'd sail to bear the storm
Befits us best, nor, helpless as we are,
With idle hopes to meditate revenge;
Yield then with me, and tho' impartial justice
Plead on thy side, remember, if we prize
Or life or liberty, we must obey.

ELECTRA.

It ill becomes great Agamemnon's daughter
Thus to forget her noble father's worth,
And take a base unworthy mother's part;
For well I see from whom thy counsels flow;
Nought from thyself thou say'st but all from her:
Either thy reason's lost or if thou hast it,
Thou hast forgot thy friends who shou'd be dear
And precious to thee: of thy boasted hate
Against

Sepulchral offerings. The libations, or sepulchral offerings here mention'd, were generally honey, wine, milk, water, and barley-flour; these were design'd to render the ghost kind and propitious, and were therefore called *χοαὶ ἡδυνησίοι* or *ἑλκυσίοι*; these were pour'd upon the ground or grave-stone, and, together with a certain form of words, offer'd to the deceased.

Against our foes, and what thou vaunt'st to do,
If thou had'st pow'r, I reckon not; whilst with me
Thou wilt not join in great revenge, but still
Dissuad'st me from it; is't not cowardly
To leave me thus? tell me, I beg thee, tell me
What mighty gain awaits my tame submission,
Shou'd I suppress my griefs: I can but live,
That I do now, a wretched life indeed!
But 'tis enough for me, and I am happy
Whilst I can torture them, and to the dead
Pay grateful honours; (if to them such care
Aught grateful can bestow) thy hate, I fear me
Is but in word: thou dost befriend the murth'ers:
For me, not all the wealth they cou'd bestow,
Not all the gifts which they have pour'd on thee,
Shou'd bind me to 'em: take thy costly banquets,
And let thy days with ease and pleasure flow;
Give me but food, and I am satisfy'd.
I wish not for thy honours, nor wou'd'st thou,
If thou wer't wise, receive 'em at their hands.
Thou might'st be daughter to the best of fathers,
And art thy mother's only; take that name,
And henceforth all shall mark thee as a wretch
Who hath betray'd her father and her friends.

C H O R U S.

I do intreat you, let not anger come
Between you thus; you both have reason'd well,
And much of mutual benefit may flow,
If each to other lend a patient ear.

C H R Y S O T H E M I S.

Custom, my noble friends, hath made reproach
Familiar to me, and so well I know
Her haughty mind, I had been silent still

But that I saw the danger imminent,
And came to warn her of the fatal stroke,
Which soon must end her and her griefs together.

ELECTRA.

Tell me this mighty danger; if aught more
It threaten than Electra long hath borne,
I yield me to thy counsels.

CHRYSOthemis.

Hear me then:

Know, thou art doom'd, unless thou dost refrain
Thy clam'rous griefs, far from the light of day,
And this thy native foil, within a cell
Dismal and dark to spend the poor remains
Of thy sad life, and there lament thy fate.

ELECTRA.

Is it decreed? must it in truth be so?

CHRYSOthemis.

Soon as Ægisthus shall return, it must.

ELECTRA.

Quick let him come; I long to see him here.

CHRYSOthemis.

Alas! what dreadful imprecations these!

ELECTRA.

Wou'd he were present, if for this he comes!

CHRYSOthemis.

What! to destroy thee! is thy mind disturb'd?

ELECTRA.

That I might fly for ever from thy sight.

CHRYSOthemis.

Wilt thou not think how to preserve thy life?

ELECTRA.

Mine is a blessed life indeed to think of.

CHRY-

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

It might be blest, if thou woud'st have it so.

ELECTRA.

Teach me not basely to betray my friends.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I do not; all I ask thee is to yield —

To pow'rs superior.

ELECTRA.

Fawn on them thyself;

Thou dost not know Electra.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Sure it better

Deserves the name of wisdom to avoid

Than hasten thy destruction.

ELECTRA.

No, to dye

Were pleasure, cou'd I but avenge my father.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Our father, doubt it not, will pardon thee.

ELECTRA.

'Tis mean to think so.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Wilt thou not consent?

ELECTRA.

Never O! never be my soul so weak.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Then to my errand: fare thee well.

ELECTRA.

To whom

Chrysothemis, and whither dost thou bear

Those sacred off'rings?

CHRY.

ELECTRA.

CHRYSOthemis.

To our father's tomb,
From Clytæmnestra.

ELECTRA.

To the man she hated?

The man, my sister-----

CHRYSOthemis.

Whom she kill'd, I know

Thou wou'd have said.

ELECTRA.

Why, what shou'd move her to it?

CHRYSOthemis.

If I mistake not, horrors late impress'd
From a sad vision.

ELECTRA.

O! my country's gods,

Succour me now!

CHRYSOthemis.

What hopes dost thou conceive

From this?

ELECTRA.

The dream: and I will tell thee all.

CHRYSOthemis.

I know but little of it.

ELECTRA.

Tell me that:

Of'times to words, how few soe'er they be,
Is giv'n the pow'r to save or to destroy.

CHRYSOthemis.

Once more to light return'd (so fame reports)

Before

Once more to light, &c. In the Choephoræ of Æschylus, Clytæmnestra dreams that she was brought to bed of a dragon, to whom she gives

Before her our lov'd father did appear,
 The royal sceptre wielded in his hand
 Which now Ægisthus bears, whence seem'd to spring
 A green and leafy branch, whose wide extent
 O'er all Mycenæ spread its verdant shade :
 This did I learn, and this alone, from one
 Who listen'd long attentive while she told
 Her vision to the sun ; hence all her fears,
 And hence my destin'd journey.

ELECTRA.

By the gods

Let me conjure thee, hear me ; if thou dost not,
 Too late shalt thou repent, when for thy guilt
 Evil o'ertake thee ; O ! Chrysothemis !
 Never, I beg thee, to our father's tomb
 Bear thou those off'rings ; 'twere a horrid deed,
 From such a woman ; give 'em to the winds,
 Let them be hid, deep bury'd in the sands,
 And not the smallest grain escape to reach
 That hallow'd place ; let 'em remain for her,

Safe

gives suck, and who draws out all her blood. Sophocles, who borrow'd this incident from his predecessor, has alter'd and improv'd it ; the circumstances here related are more interesting, and the interpretation more obvious ; besides that, it is render'd instrumental to the plan of the drama, by sending Chrysothemis to her father's tomb, where she finds the offerings of Orestes, which prepares the discovery of his unexpected arrival.

Told her vision to the sun. It was customary among the antients, when they had been terrify'd by bad dreams, to open their windows in the morning, and relate their dreams to the sun, who, they imagined, as he had power to dispel the darkness, could also turn aside all the evils which the preceding night had threaten'd them with ; Apollo was therefore stiled *ὑποπναιος* or, the averter of evil, and had images erected to him under that title.

Safe in the earth till she shall meet 'em there.
 None but this shameless, this abandon'd woman
 Wou'd e'er with impious off'rings thus adorn
 The tomb of him she murther'd: by the dead
 Think'ft thou such gifts can be with joy receiv'd?
 Gifts from that hand, which from his mangled corse
 Sever'd his lifeless limbs, and on the head
 Of the poor victim wiped her bloody sword:
 Madness to think that off'rings and ablutions
 Cou'd purge such crimes, or wash her stains away;
 Never, O! never: but of this no more:
 Instant, my sister, thy devoted hair
 With these dishevell'd locks, and this my zone,
 Plain as it is and unadorn'd, shalt thou
 Bear to our father; wretched off'rings these!
 But O! 'tis all Electra now can give.
 Bear them, and suppliant on thy knees implore him
 To smile propitious, and assist his children;
 Pray for Orestes too, that soon with pow'r
 He may return, and trample on our foes;
 So shall a fairer, tribute one day grace
 His honour'd tomb than now we can bestow.
 Trust me, my sister, we are still his care,

I know,

Sever'd his lifeless limbs. The word *εμαχαλιδν* in the original, and which is made use of by Æschylus also, is supposed by the commentators to allude to a superstitious custom of achroterising, or cutting off the external parts of the person slain, and fixing them under their arm-pits; a kind of charm, which the murtherer imagined would prevent him from sending the furies to revenge his murther.

Wip'd her bloody sword. The murtherer wiped the instrument of the murther in the hair of the deceased, and then washed it, persuaded that this would wipe away the guilt also.

I know, we are ; from him the vision came,
 The horrid dream that shook her guilty soul :
 Now then, I beg thee, be a friend to me,
 Be to thyself a friend, a friend to him,
 Of all mankind the dearest, our dead father.

CHORUS.

Well doth the pious virgin speak, and thou
 Must yield to her requests.

CHRYSOthemis.

And so I will.

Where reason dictates, strife shou'd never come ;
 But quick, dispatch, fulfil her just commands,
 Yet, O ! my friends, remember, our attempt
 Is full of danger, and let nought escape
 That may betray me to my cruel mother ;
 For, if it reach her ear, this daring act,
 I fear me much, shall one day cost us dear.

[Exit Chrysothemis.]

SCENE V.

CHORUS, ELECTRA.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Or my prophetic mind is now no more
 Attentive as of old to wisdom's lore,

Or

Scene V. This is the first song or intermede of the Chorus, who, after hearing the dream related by Chrysothemis, draw from it fair omens of Electra's success, and vengeance on the murderers of Agamemnon : it is remarkable that Electra remains on the stage all the time ; a plain proof among many others that (as it is observed in the dissertation) the division of these tragedies into acts is merely arbitrary, and of late invention, as it would be absurd for the principal character to appear thus between the acts.

Or justice comes, with speedy vengeance fraught ;
 Behold ! the goddess arm'd with pow'r appears,
 It must be so, by Clytæmnestra's fears,
 And the dire dream that on her fancy wrought :
 Thy father, not unmindful of his fate,
 Shall hither come his wrongs to vindicate ;
 And, in his gore imbrued,
 The fatal axe with him shall rise,
 Shall ask another sacrifice,
 And drink with him the cruel tyrant's blood.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Lo ! with unnumber'd hands, and countless feet
 The fury comes her destin'd prey to meet,
 Deep in the covert hid she glides unseen,
 Hangs o'er the trembling murth'rer's head,
 Or steals to the adult'rous bed,
 An awful witness of the guilty scene ;
 Doubtless the dream with all its terrors meant
 For crimes like these some dreadful punishment,
 If mortals aught from nightly visions know,
 If truth from great Apollo's shrine
 Appears in oracles divine,
 Prefaging bliss to come, or threat'ning future woe.

E P O D E.

O ! Pelops, to thy country and to thee,
 The fatal course brought woe and misery ;
 For since the time when from his chariot thrown,
 For thee the guilty wreath to gain,
 The hapless Myrtilus was slain,
 Nought has thy wretched race but grief and sorrow known.

A C T

The hapless Myrtilus. To understand this passage it is necessary to be acquainted with the following story.

Ocnomus

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS absent, who alone cou'd curb
 Thy haughty spirit, and licentious tongue;
 At large, it seems, thou rov'st, and unrestrain'd,
 No defence paid to my authority,
 But on thy mother ever pouring forth
 Bitter invectives, while the list'ning croud
 Are taught to hold me proud, and fierce of soul,
 A lawless tyrant stand'ring thee and thine:
 I am no stand'rer, I abhor the name,

But

Oenomaus had a beautiful daughter, named Hippodamia, whom he refused to give in marriage, because the oracle declared that a son-in-law would be fatal to him; he promised however, to bestow his daughter on any man who should conquer him in the chariot-race, on condition that all, who were vanquish'd by him, should be put to death: many bold adventurers accepted the terms, and perished in the attempt; the horses of Oenomaus were swift as the wind, and consequently invincible; these examples however did not deter Pelops, who entered the lists against Oenomaus, and bribed his charioteer Myrtilus with a promise of half his kingdom if he succeeded; Myrtilus listened to his offers, and purposely forgot to put the pins into the wheels of his master's chariot, which broke in pieces in the middle of the course. Pelops espoused Hippodamia, but afterwards, instead of performing his promise to Myrtilus, chose rather to get rid of this instrument of treachery, by throwing him into the sea. Mercury, who it seems was the father of Myrtilus, revenged the murder of his son, by entailing curses on Pelops and all his posterity. It appears by this, that the Heathens believed that God punished the crimes of fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation.

But oft revil'd, of force I must reply,
 And send thy foul reproaches back upon thee.
 Thou say'st I slew thy father; that alone
 Is left to plead for all thy insolence:
 I do confess the deed, and glory in it;
 I slew thy father; yet not I alone,
 I had the hand of justice to assist me,
 And shou'd have had Electra's: well thou know'st,
 That cruel father, for whom thus thy tears
 Incessant flow, that father slew his child;
 He, he alone of all the Grecian host
 Gave up his daughter, horrid sacrifice!
 To the offended gods: he never felt
 A mother's pangs, and therefore thought not of them;
 Or if he did, why slay the innocent?
 For Greece, thou tell'st me: Greece cou'd never claim
 A right to what was mine; or did she fall
 For Menelaus? he had children too;
 Why might not they have dy'd? their parent's guilt,
 Source of the war, more justly had deserv'd it;
 Or think'st thou death with keener appetite
 Cou'd feast on mine, and Helen's not afford
 As sweet a banquet? why was all the love,
 To me and to my child so justly due,
 With lavish hand bestow'd on Menelaus?
 Was he not then a base inhuman father?

He

He had children too. According to Homer (see Odyss. b. 4.) Menelaus had only one child, Hermione. Hesiod gives him two, Hermione and Nicostratus: the latter tradition was more agreeable to Sophocles; because, if Menelaus had but one child, the loss would have been greater to him than to Agamemnon, who had many; this we see, would destroy the force of Clytemnestra's argument, which is strengthened by the other supposition.

He was: and so, cou'd Iphigenia speak,
 Thy breathless sister, she too wou'd declare:
 Know then, I grieve not; shame or penitence
 I feel not for the deed; and if to thee
 It seem so heinous, weigh each circumstance,
 Remember what he did, and lay the blame
 On him who well deserv'd the fate he suffer'd.

ELECTRA.

Thou hast no plea for bitterness like this;
 Thou can'st not say that I provok'd thee to it,
 I have been silent: had I leave to speak
 I cou'd defend an injur'd father's cause,
 And tell thee wherefore Iphigenia fell.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

I do permit thee; and if modest thus
 Thou had'st address'd me always, thy free speech
 Had ne'er offended.

ELECTRA.

Hast thou not confess'd
 That thou did'st slay my father? whether justice
 Approve or not, 'twas horrid to confess it;
 But justice never cou'd persuade thee, no;
 I'll tell thee who it was, it was Ægisthus,
 The wretch with whom thou liv'st; go ask the goddess,
 Th' immortal huntress, why the winds were stay'd

H

So

Cou'd Iphigenia speak. Clytæmnestra endeavours to palliate her guilt, by reproaching Agamemnon with the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Euripides strengthens this plea by the addition of another, which the ladies will allow to have been still more forcible, viz. that Agamemnon kept another woman, and even brought her into the same house with his wife. The fact is thus alluded to by Ovid,

Dum fuit Atrides una contentus, & illa

Castâ fuit; vitio est improba facta viri.

So long at Aulis ; but thou must not ask
 The chaste Diana ; take it then from me ;
 My father once, as for the chace prepar'd,
 Careless he wander'd thro' her sacred grove,
 Forth from it's covert rous'd a spotted hind,
 Of fairest form, with tow'ring antlers grac'd,
 Pursu'd and slew her ; of the deity
 Something with pride élâté he utter'd then
 Disdainful ; quick resenting the affront,
 Latona's daughter stay'd the Grecian fleet,
 Nor wou'd forgive, till for her slaughter'd beast
 Th' offending father sacrific'd his child.
 Thus Iphigenia fell ; and but for her,
 Greece ne'er had seen or Ilion's lofty tow'rs,
 Or her own native soil ; the father strove,
 In vain to save, and not for Menelaüs
 He gave her up at last, but for his country.
 Suppose a brother's fondness had prevail'd,
 And she was giv'n for him, wou'd that excuse
 Thy horrid deed ? what law requir'd it of thee ?
 That law alone by which thyself must fall ;
 If blood for blood be due, thy doom is fix'd.

Pleas'd

Thou must not ask the chaste Diana. A murderer and adulteress, like Clytæmnestra, must not dare to approach or speak to the goddess of chastity. Clytæmnestra feels the reproach, but at the same time, to persuade Electra that she was not affected by it, a few lines after we find her invoking that goddess, "by chaste Diana, soon as Ægisthus comes, &c." *My father once, &c.* There is certainly an impropriety (though not, as I remember, observed by any of the commentators) in relating this story to Clytæmnestra, who, we must suppose, could be no stranger to it. Sophocles, however, thought it might be necessary to acquaint the audience with this circumstance, and therefore took this method to inform them of it.

Plead not so poorly then, but tell me why
 Thou liv'st adult'rous thus with a vile ruffian,
 Thy base assistant? why are those, who sprung
 From thy first nuptials, cast unkindly forth
 For his new race? was this thy piety,
 Was this too to revenge thy daughter's death?
 In pure revenge to wed her deadliest foe
 Was noble, was it not? but I forget,
 You are my mother, so it seems you say,
 And I must hold my peace; but I deny it;
 I say you are my mistress, not my mother;
 A cruel mistress that afflicts my soul,
 And makes this weary life a burthen to me.
 Orestes too, the hapless fugitive,
 Who once escap'd thy fatal hand, now drags
 A loathsome being; him, thou say'st, I look'd for
 To join in my revenge, and so I did;
 I wou'd have been reveng'd, I tell thee so:
 Say, I am base, malicious, impudent,
 Abusive, what thou wilt; for if I am,
 It speaks my birth, and I resemble thee.

CHORUS.

Resentment deep hath fir'd the virgin's breast;
 Whether with truth and justice on her side
 She speak, I know not.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Can they plead for her?
 What care, what love, or tenderness is due
 To an abandon'd child, who shameless thus
 Reviles a parent? is there, after this,
 A crime in nature she wou'd blush to act?

ELECTRA.

I am not base, nor shameless, as thou call'st me,

For know, even now I blush for what is past,
 Indecent warmth, and words that ill became
 My tender years, and virgin modesty;
 But 'twas thy guilt, thy malice urg'd me to it:
 From bad examples, bad alone we learn,
 I only err'd because I follow'd thee.

CLYTÆMNESTRA,

Impudent wretch! and am I then the cause
 Of all thy clam'rous insolence?

ELECTRA.

Thou art:

Foul is thy speech, because thy deed was foul;
 For words from actions flow.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

By chaste Diana,

Soon as Ægisthus comes, thy boldness meets
 Its just reward.

ELECTRA.

Is this thy promis'd leave,
 So lately granted, freely to unfold
 What now incens'd thou dost refuse to hear?

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Have I not heard thee, and in base return
 With luckless omen dost thou now retard
 My pious sacrifice?

ELECTRA.

O! far from me

Be guilt like that; perform it, I beseech thee;

In

With luckless omen, &c. The antients were of opinion, that if, during the time of sacrifice, they heard any thing melancholy, it was an ill omen; in the beginning of those therefore that were public, silence was enjoined to all present; hence the phrase of *fayete linguis*.

In holy silence shall these lips be clos'd,
And not a word escape to thwart thy purpose.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

[speaking to one of her attendants.]

Hither do thou the sacred off'rings bring
Of various fruits compos'd, that to the god
Whose altars we adorn, my fervent pray'r
May rise accepted, and dispel my fears.
Hear then, Apollo, great protector, hear
My secret vows, for with no friendly ear [softly.]
My voice is heard; her malice wou'd betray,
Shou'd I unveil my heart, each word I utter'd,
And scatter idle rumours thro' the croud.
Thus then accept my pray'rs, Lycean Phœbus! [aloud.]
If in the doubtful visions of the night
Which broke my slumbers, aught presaging good
Thou see'st, propitious O! confirm it all;
But if of dire-portent, and fraught with ill
To me and mine they came, avert the omen,
And send the evil back upon my foes!
O! if there are, whose fraudulent arts conspire
To cast me forth from all my present bliss,
Let 'em not prosper, but protect me still!
Grant me to live and reign in quiet here,
To spend each happy hour with those I love;

H 3

With

Hear my secret vows. Brumoy observes on this passage, that Clytæmnestra here retires towards a corner of the scene, near the altar, where she makes her prayer, and offers the sacrifice, whilst Electra remains upon the stage at a little distance from her; we must suppose her therefore, speaking part of this speech aloud, and part softly, so as not to be over-heard by Electra: she implores Apollo to mark rather the purport, than the words of her prayer; this she utters in a low voice, till she comes to Lycean Phœbus, &c. which she speaks aloud.

With those my children who have ne'er offended
 By malice, pride and bitterness of soul ;
 Grant this, indulgent Phœbus ! what remains
 Unask'd, thou see'st ; for nought escapes the eye
 Of gods, such knowledge have the sons of Jove.

SCENE II.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, CLYTÆMNESTRA,
 ELECTRA, COHRUS.

GOVERNOR.

Is this the royal palace of Ægisthus ?

CHORUS.

Stranger, it is.

GOVERNOR.

And this, for such her form
 And look majestic speak her, is his queen ;
 Is it not so ?

CHORUS.

It is.

GOVERNOR.

Great sov'reign, hail !

With joyful news I come, and from a friend,
 To thee and to Ægisthus.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Stranger, welcome ;
 Say, first, from whom thy message ?

GOVER-

With those my children, &c. Iphianassa and Chrysothemis, who had not affronted her, in opposition to Electra, who had.

What remains unask'd, &c. Most probably the death of Orestes and Electra, which she did not dare to mention in the presence of her daughter. Clytemnestra's character is finely drawn ; her very prayers we see are wicked, and agreeable to her actions.

GOVERNOR.

From Phanoteus;

A Phocian sends thee things of utmost moment.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Of moment say'st thou? what? impart them quick.

Of friendly import, if from thence they come,

I know they must be.

GOVERNOR.

Briefly then, 'tis this;

Orestes is no more.

ELECTRA,

Undone Electra!

Now am I lost indeed.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

What say'st thou? speak,

Regard not her; go on.

GOVERNOR.

I say again,

Orestes is no more.

ELECTRA.

Then what am I?

I too am nothing.

[to Electra.]

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Get thee hence, away!

Disturb us not: most welcome messenger;

[to the Governor.]

Go on, I beg thee, let me hear it all;

Say how he dy'd; tell ev'ry circumstance.

GOVERNOR.

For that I came, and I will tell thee all.

Know then, Orestes at the Pythian games,
 Eager for glory met assembled Greece;
 Soon as the herald's far-resounding voice
 Proclaim'd the course, the graceful youth appear'd,
 And was by all admir'd: successful soon
 He reach'd the goal, and bore his prize away.
 Ne'er did these eyes behold such feats perform'd
 By mortal strength; in ev'ry course superior
 He rose victorious: theme of ev'ry tongue
 Was the brave Argive, great Atrides' son,
 Who led the Græcian host; but O! in vain
 Doth human valour strive, when pow'r divine
 Pursues vindictive! the succeeding morn
 Uprose the sun, and with him all the train
 Of youthful rivals in the chariot race;
 One from Achaia, one from Sparta came,

Of

Orestes at the Pythian games, &c. Our modern critics will perhaps be of opinion, that this description of the Pythian games, so much admired by the favourers of antiquity, is too long, and rather interrupts than carries on the business of the drama; it will be in vain therefore to inform them, that this circumstantial detail was necessary to give the story an air of veracity in the eyes of the person to whom it is related, at the same time that the author had, by this means, an opportunity of shewing his poetical and descriptive talents in the narration.

In ev'ry course superior, &c. The *πντταδλον* or quinquertium, here alluded to, consisted of five exercises, viz. leaping, running, throwing, darting, and wrestling; Orestes conquer'd in every one of them; this was the business of the first day of the games, the second was employed in the chariot-race, which is here minutely and accurately described.

One from Achaia, &c. In the Greek, it is the first from Achaia, the second from Sparta, and so on to the tenth, which would have made

Of Afric's sons advanc'd a noble pair,
 And join'd the throng; with these Orestes drove
 His swift Theſſalian ſteeds; Ætolia next
 For yellow courſers fam'd; and next Magnesia;
 And Athens, built by hands divine, ſent forth
 Her ſkilful charioteer; an Ænian next
 Drove his white Horſes thro' the field; and laſt
 A brave Bæotian clos'd the warrior train.
 And now in order rang'd, as each by lot
 Determin'd ſtood, forth at the trumpet's ſound
 They ruſh'd together, ſhook their glitt'ring reins,
 And laſh'd their foaming courſers o'er the plain.
 Loud was the din of ratt'ling cars involv'd
 In duſty clouds; cloſe on each other preſt
 The rival youths, together ſtopt, and turn'd
 Together all: the hapleſs Ænian firſt,
 His fiery ſteeds impatient of ſubjection,
 Entangled on the Lybian chariot hung;
 Confuſion ſoon and terror thro' the croud
 Diſaſtrous ſpread; the jarring axles rung;
 Wheel within wheel now crack'd, till Chryſa's field
 Was with the ſcatter'd ruins quite o'erſpread.
 Th' Athenian cautious view'd the diſtant danger,
 Drew in the rein, and turn'd his car aſide,
 Then paſt them all. Orestes, who ſecure
 Of conqueſt lagg'd behind, with eager pace

Now

made an aukward appearance in English; I have therefore taken the liberty to vary the method of enumerating them in the tranſlation.

Athens built by hands divine. Sophocles, who was an Athenian, takes every opportunity of doing honour to his countrymen; Athens, we ſee, is diſtinguiſhed by him in the liſt as built by hands divine; and the Athenian charioteer, ſeleſted from the rival chiefs, to contend with his hero Orestes, who had eaſily overcome all the reſt.

Now urg'd his rapid course, and swift pursu'd.
 Sharp was the contest; now th' Athenian first,
 And now Orestes o'er his coursers hung,
 Now side by side they ran; when to the last
 And fatal goal they came, Atides' son,
 As chance with slacken'd rein he turn'd the car,
 Full on the pillar struck, tore from the wheel
 Its brittle spokes, and from his seat down drop'd
 Precipitate; entangled in the reins
 His fiery coursers dragg'd him o'er the field,
 Whilst shrieking crouds with pity view'd the youth,
 Whose gallant deeds deserv'd a better fate.
 Scarce cou'd they stop the rapid car, or loose
 His mangled corse, so drench'd in blood, so chang'd,
 That scarce a friend cou'd say it was Orestes.
 Strait on the pile they burnt his sad remains,
 And, in an urn enclos'd, a chosen few
 From Phocis sent have brought his ashes home,
 To reap due honours in his native land.

Thus have I told thee all, a dreadful tale!
 But O! how far more dreadful to behold it,
 And be like me a witness of the scene!

C H O R U S.

Ah me! the royal race, the antient house
 Of my lov'd master is no more!

C L Y T Æ M N E S T R A.

Great Jove!

Th' event was happy, but 'tis mix'd with woe.

For,

'Tis mixed with woe. Dacier highly commends the art of the poet in Clytæmnestra's expression of uneasiness at the death of Orestes; as to have received the news without any marks of tenderness or compassion would have been shocking to nature and humanity. But perhaps.

For, O! 'tis bitter to reflect, that life
And safety must be purchas'd by misfortunes.

GOVERNOR.

Why grieve you, madam?

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

'Tis a bitter task

To bring forth children; tho' a mother's wrong'd,
A mother cannot hate the babe she bore.

GOVERNOR.

Then with ungrateful news in vain I came;

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

O no; most welcome is the man who brings
Such joyful tidings, that a thankless child
Is gone, who left a tender mother's arms,
To live a voluntary exile from me;
Ne'er to these eyes return'd, but absent rag'd,
And threaten'd vengeance for his murder'd father;
Day had no rest for me, nor did the night
Bring needful slumbers, thoughts of instant death
Appall'd me ever; but my fears are gone;
He cannot hurt me now, nor worse than him,
This vile domestic plague, who haunts me still
To suck my vital blood; but henceforth safe,
Spite of her threats, shall Clytæmnestra live.

ELECTRA.

Now, my Orestes, I indeed must mourn
Thy cruel fate, embitter'd by reproach,
And from a mother's tongue; this is not well.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

With him it is, and wou'd it were with thee!

ELEC.

perhaps a better reason for this dissembled sorrow may be drawn
from her willingness to preserve some decency and appearance of
virtue in the eyes of the messenger.

ELECTRA.

Attend, O! Nemesis! and hear the dead!

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

She heard that voice which best deserv'd her ear,
And her decrees are just.

ELECTRA.

Go on, proud woman;
Insult us now, whilst fortune smiles upon thee.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Dost thou then hope that we shall fall hereafter?

ELECTRA.

No! we are fall'n ourselves, and cannot hurt thee.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Thrice worthy is that messenger of joy
Whose gladsome news shall stop thy clam'rous tongue.

GOVERNOR.

My task perform'd, permit me to retire.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

No, stranger, that were an affront to thee,
And to our friend who sent thee here. Go in,
And leave that noisy wretch to bellow forth
Her sorrows, and bewail her lost Orestes.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

Mark'd ye, my friends, did ye observe her tears?
Did she lament him? did the mother weep
For her lost child? O no; she smiled and left me;
Wretched Electra! O my dear Orestes!
Thou hast undone me; thou wert all my hope:
I thought thou woud'st have liv'd to aid my vengeance

For

For our lov'd father's death ; depriv'd of both
 Whither shall I betake me ! left at last
 A slave to those whom most on earth I hate,
 The cruel murth'ers ; must it then be so ?
 Never, O never ! thus bereft of all,
 Here will I lay me down, and on this spot
 End my sad days ; if it offend the tyrants,
 Let 'em destroy me ; 'twill be kindly done ;
 Life is a pain ; I wou'd not wish to keep it.

CHORUS.

Where is thy thunder, Jove ? or, where thy pow'r,
 O Phœbus ! if thou dost behold this deed
 And not avenge it ?

ELEC-

Here will I lay me down. Electra, shock'd at the behaviour of Clytæmnestra, and apprehensive of still worse treatment than she had ever yet received, is resolved never to re-enter the palace of Ægisthus ; but lays herself down in anguish on the ground to lament her misfortunes. There is something not unlike this in Shakespear's king John, where Constance throws herself on the earth. See king John, act 3, scene 1.

Where is thy thunder, Jove, &c. I see no reason for making the alteration here proposed by Dacier, and putting these words into the mouth of Electra ; surely the reflection comes naturally from the chorus, who had been witnesses of Clytæmnestra's behaviour on the news of Orestes' death. It may not be improper here to observe, that this is generally call'd the second intermede, or song of the chorus ; who in, conjunction with Electra, remaining on the stage, as at the end of the first act, sing a kind of dirge, lamenting the miseries of their friend, and endeavouring to comfort her under them ; this is all in Strophe and Antistrophe, and most probably was set to music : it shou'd therefore, according to my plan, have been put into rhyme, to distinguish it from the other parts of the drama ; but as it consists of question and answer, it would have made but a strange and uncouth appearance in that garb. I have therefore preserved the blank verse, which my readers will, I believe, think with me, was much more suitable to it.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

Oh!

CHORUS.

Why mourn'st thou thus?

ELECTRA.

Alas!

CHORUS.

O! do not groan thus.

ELECTRA.

Thou destroy'st me.

CHORUS.

How have I hurt thee?

ELECTRA.

Why thus vainly try

To give me comfort, when I know he's dead?

You but insult my woes.

CHORUS.

Yet weep not thus.

Think on the golden bracelet that betray'd

Amphiaraus, who now-----

ELECTRA.

O! me!

CHORUS.

-----In bliss

Immortal reigns among the shades below.

ELEC:

The golden bracelet that betrayed Amphiaraus. Amphiaraus was a famous soothsayer. During the time of the Theban war, he was solicited by Adrastus to assist Polynices, his son-in-law. Amphiaraus, foreseeing by his art, that if he went he should be slain, hid himself, but was discovered by his wife Eriphyle, whom Polynices had bribed with a golden bracelet. Amphiaraus, being thus obliged to appear at the siege of Thebes, perish'd there. Alcmaeon his son revenged his father's death, and slew his mother Eriphyle.

Alas!

ELECTRA.

CHORUS.

No more; a woman was the cause,
Th' accursed cause.

ELECTRA.

She suffer'd, did she not?

CHORUS.

She did; she perish'd.

ELECTRA.

Yes; I know it well;

He found a kind avenger of his wrongs,
But I have none, for he is ravish'd from me.

CHORUS.

Thou art indeed unhappy.

ELECTRA.

'Tis too true.

I am most wretched, it beats hard upon me;
My sorrows never cease.

CHORUS.

We see thy woes.

ELECTRA.

Therefore no more attempt to bring me comfort;
There is no hope.

CHORUS.

What say'st thou?

ELECTRA.

There is none,

None left for me; my noble brother slain.

CHORUS.

Death is the lot of human race.

ELECTRA.

But, oh!

Not

Not death like his ; entangled in the reins,
His mangled body dragg'd along the field.

CHORUS.

A strange unthought of chance.

ELECTRA.

And then to fall!

A wretched stranger in a foreign land.

CHORUS.

O ! horrible !

ELECTRA.

No sister there to close

His dying eyes, to grace him with a tomb,
Or pay the last sad tributary tear.

[Exeunt.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

CHRYSOthemis, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOthemis.

FORGIVE me, sister, if my hasty steps
Press unexpected on thee ; but I come
With joyful tidings, to relieve thy toils,
And make thee happy.

ELEC-

My hasty steps, &c. Camerarius, in a note on this passage, very gravely remarks, that a lady should never run, " quoniam in mulieribus cunctabunda omnia magis probantur," " because it is more becoming in women to do every thing deliberately." Dacier likewise, with the refinement of a true French critic, observes, that it would be highly indecent in a virgin and a princess to walk fast : Sophocles, says he, ne manque pas à une seule bein-seance. Of such sagacious animadversions as these, do principally consist the illustrations of both the antient and modern commentators on Sophocles ; scarce one of which (Brumoy excepted) seems to have read him with any taste or judgment.

ELECTRA.

What can'st thou have found
To soften ills that will admit no cure?

CHRYSOthemis.

Orestes is arrived; as sure as here
I stand before thee, the dear youth is come.

ELECTRA.

Can'st thou then make a mock'ry of my woes;
Or dost thou rave?

CHRYSOthemis.

No, by our father's gods,
I do not mean to scoff; but he is come.

ELECTRA.

Alas! who told thee so? What tongue deceiv'd
Thy credulous ear?

CHRYSOthemis.

Know, from myself alone
I learn'd the truth, and confirmations strong
Oblige me to believe it.

ELECTRA.

What firm proof
Can'st thou produce? what hast thou seen or known
To raise such flatt'ring hopes?

CHRYSOthemis.

O! by the gods
I beg thee but to hear me, then approve
Or blame, impartial.

ELECTRA.

If to tell thy tale
Can give thee pleasure, say it; I attend.

CHRYSOthemis.

Know then, that soon as to our father's tomb
Eager I came, my wond'ring eyes beheld

I

Down

Down from its side a milky fountain flow,
 As lately pour'd by some benignant hand ;
 With various flow'rs the sacred spot adorn'd
 Encreas'd my doubts ; on ev'ry side I look'd
 And listen'd long impatient for the tread
 Of human footsteps there ; but all was peace,
 Fearless approaching then the hallow'd spot,
 I saw it spread with fresh devoted hair ;
 Instant my soul recall'd its dearest hope,
 Nor doubted whence the pious off'rings came ;
 I snatch'd them up and silent gaz'd, while joy
 Sprang in my heart, and fill'd my eyes with tears.
 They were, they must be his ; ourselves alone
 Excepted, who cou'd bring them ? 'twas not I,
 And 'tis not giv'n to thee to leave these walls
 Ev'n for the gods ; our mother scarce wou'd do
 So good an office ; or ev'n grant she might,
 We must have known it soon ; be confident,
 It was Orestes then ; rejoice, Electra,
 Sister, rejoice ; the same destructive pow'r
 Doth not for ever rule ; behold at last
 A milder god, and happier days appear.

E L E C T R A.

Madness, and folly ! how I pity thee !

C H R Y -

Our mother scarce, &c. This assertion may probably appear strange from the mouth of Chrysothemis, who had herself so lately been sent by Clytemnestra with offerings to the tomb of Agamemnon ; why therefore might not she have made these libations also ? There is no way of reconciling this seeming inconsistency, but by supposing that the libations here mention'd were of a different nature from the former ; the first were an expiatory offering to turn aside the vengeance of the deceased ; the last, of that kind which was generally made use of to signify the peculiar love and affection of those who made them.

CHRYSOthemis.

Have I not brought most joyful tidings to thee?

ELECTRA.

Alas! thou know'st not where nor what thou art.

CHRYSOthemis.

Not know it? not believe what I have seen?

ELECTRA.

I tell thee, wretched as thou art, he's dead;

He and thy hoped-for bliss are gone together.

Thou must not think of it.

CHRYSOthemis.

A wretch indeed

I am, if this be so, but O! from whom,

Where didst thou learn the fatal news?

ELECTRA.

From one,

Who was a witness of his death.

CHRYSOthemis.

Where is he?

Amazement chills my soul.

ELECTRA.

He is within;

And no unwelcome guest to Clytæmnestra.

CHRYSOthemis.

Alas! who then cou'd bring those pious gifts?

I 2 ELEC-

He's dead. The hopes and joy of Chrysothemis are finely contrasted by the grief and despair of Electra. One brings the news of his arrival, the other of his death; thus the spectator, who is already acquainted with the truth, is made to sympathize with the unhappy sisters, and grows impatient for the discovery. Every subordinate circumstance, we see, by the artful conduct of the poet, is introduced to prepare the principal event, and heighten the terror and surprise of the catastrophe.

ELECTRA.

Some friend to lost Orestes plac'd them there.

CHRYSOthemis.

I flew with joy to tell thee better news,

And little thought to hear so sad a tale.

The griefs I came to cure are present still,

And a new weight of woes is come upon us.

ELECTRA.

But know, my sister, all may yet be well,

If thou wilt hear me.

CHRYSOthemis.

Can I raise the dead?

ELECTRA.

I am not mad that I shou'd ask it of thee.

CHRYSOthemis.

What wou'dst thou have me do?

ELECTRA.

I'd have thee act

As I shall dictate to thee.

CHRYSOthemis.

If aught good

It may produce, I do consent.

ELECTRA.

Remember,

That if we hope to prosper, we must bear;

Success in all that's human must depend

On patience and on toil.

CHRYSOthemis.

I know it well,

And stand resolv'd to bear my part in all.

ELECTRA.

Hear then the solemn purport of my soul.

Thou know'st too well how friendless and forlorn

We

We both are left, by death bereav'd of all
 Who cou'd support us ; whilst Orestes liv'd,
 I cherish'd flatt'ring thoughts of sweet revenge,
 But he is gone, and thou art now my hope.
 Yes, thou must join (for I will tell thee all)
 With thy Electra to destroy Ægisthus,
 To kill the murth'rer ; why shou'd we delay ?
 Is aught of comfort left ? thou can'st but weep
 Thy ravish'd fortunes torn unjustly from thee ;
 Thou canst but mourn thy loss of nuptial rites,
 And each domestic bliss ; for O ! my sister,
 The tyrant cannot be so weak of soul
 As e'er to suffer our detested race
 To send new branches forth for his destruction ;
 Assist me then ; so shalt thou best deserve
 A father's praises and a brother's love ;
 So shalt thou still, as thou wert born, be free,
 And gain a partner worthy of thy bed.
 Dost thou not hear th' applauding voice of fame,
 And ev'ry tongue conspire to praise the deed ?
 Will they not mark us as we pass along,
 And cry aloud, " behold the noble pair !
 " The pious sisters who preserv'd their race,
 " Whose daring souls, unaw'd by danger, sought
 " The tyrants life, regardless of their own.
 " What love to these, what reverence is due !
 " These shall th' assembled nation throng to praise,
 " And ev'ry feast with public honours crown,
 " The fit reward of more than female virtue ?
 Thus will they talk, my sister, whilst we live,
 And after death our names shall be immortal.
 Aid then a brother's, aid a sister's cause,
 Think on thy father's wrongs, preserve Electra,

Preserve thyself; and, O! remember well
That, to the noble mind, a life dishonour'd
Is infamy and shame.

CHORUS.

Be prudence now

The guide of both.

CHRYSOthemis.

Her mind was sure disturb'd,

My friends, or she wou'd ne'er have talk'd so wildly.

Tell me, I beg thee tell me, my Electra,

How cou'dst thou think so rash an enterprize

Cou'd e'er succeed, or how request my aid?

Hast thou consider'd what thou art? a woman,

Weak and defenceless, to thy foes unequal;

Fortune thou see'st each hour flows in upon them,

Nor deigns to look on us: what hand shall deal

The fatal blow and pass unpunish'd for it?

Take heed, my sister, lest, thy counsel heard,

A heavier fate than what we now lament

Fall on us both; what will our boasted fame

Avail us then? It is not death alone

We have to fear; to die is not the worst

Of human ills, it is to wish for death

And be refus'd the boon; consider well,

E'er we destroy ourselves and all our race!

Be patient, dear Electra; for thy words,

As they had ne'er been utter'd, here they rest:

Learn to be wise at last, and when thou know'st

Resistance vain, submit to pow'r's superior.

CHORUS.

Submit, convinc'd that prudence is the first

Of human blessings.

ELEC-

ELECTRA.

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ELECTRA.

'Tis as I expected;

I knew full well thou woudst reject my counsel,
But I can act alone; nor shall this arm
Shrink at the blow, or leave it's work unfinish'd.

CHRYSOthemis.

Wou'd thou hadst shewn this so much vaunted prowess
When our lov'd father dy'd!

ELECTRA.

I was the same

By nature then, but of a weaker mind.

CHRYSOthemis.

Be sure thy courage fail thee not hereafter.

ELECTRA.

Thy aid will ne'er increase it.

CHRYSOthemis.

'Twill be wanted;

For those who act thus rashly must expect
The fate they merit.

ELECTRA.

I admire thy prudence,

But I detest thy cowardice.

CHRYSOthemis.

I hear thee

With patience; for the time must one day come
When thou shalt praise me.

ELECTRA.

Never.

CHRYSOthemis.

Be that left

For time to judge; enough remains.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

Away;

There's no dependence on thee.

CHRYSOthemis.

But there is,

Had'st thou a mind dispos'd for it's acceptance.

ELECTRA.

Go, tell thy mother all.

CHRYSOthemis.

I am not yet

So much thy enemy.

ELECTRA.

And yet wou'd lead me

To Infamy.

CHRYSOthemis.

To safety and to wisdom.

ELECTRA.

Must I then judge as thy superior reason

May dictate to me?

CHRYSOthemis.

When thy better mind

Shall come, I'll not refuse to follow thee.

ELECTRA.

Pity who talks so well, shou'd act so poorly!

CHRYSOthemis.

That censure falls on thee.

ELECTRA.

What I have said

Is truth.

CHRYSOthemis.

Truth, sister, may be dangerous.

ELECTRA.

Rather than thus submit I will not live.

CHRY-

ELECTRA.

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CHRYSOthemis.

Hereafter thou wilt praise me.

ELECTRA.

I shall ask

As seems most fit, nor wait for thy direction.

CHRYSOthemis.

Art thou resolv'd then? wilt thou not repent

And take my counsel?

ELECTRA.

Counsel, such as thine,

Is of all ills the worst.

CHRYSOthemis.

Because, Electra,

'Thou dost not seem to understand it.

ELECTRA.

Know then,

That long ere this I had determin'd all.

CHRYSOthemis.

Then fare thee well; thou canst not bear my words,

Nor I thy actions.

ELECTRA.

Go thy ways; henceforth

I will not commune with thee; nor thy pray'rs,

No, nor thy tears should ever bend me to it;

Such idle commerce were the height of folly.

CHRYSOthemis.

If thou dost think this wisdom, think so still;

But when destruction comes, thou wilt approve

My better counsel, and be wise too late.

[Exeunt.

SCENE

S C E N E II.

CHORUS.

STROPHE. I.

Man's ungrateful wretched race,
 Shall the birds of heav'n disgrace,
 Whose ever-watchful, ever-pious young,
 Protect the feeble parent whence they sprung?
 But if the blast of angry Jove
 Hath pow'r to strike, or justice reigns above,
 Not long unpunish'd shall such crimes remain;
 When thou, O fame! the messenger of woe,
 Shalt bear these tidings to the realms below,
 Tidings to Grecia's chiefs of sorrow and of pain.

ANTISTROPHE.

Bid the sad Atridæ mourn
 Their house by cruel faction torn;
 Tell 'em, no longer by affection join'd,
 The tender sisters bear a friendly mind;
 The poor Electra now alone,
 Making her fruitless solitary moan,
 Like Philomela, weeps her father's fate;
 Fearless of death and every human ill,
 Resolv'd her steady vengeance to fulfil;
 Was ever child so good, or piety so great?

STRO-

Man's ungrateful, &c. This, according to the received division into five acts, is the third song or intermede of the chorus, and closes the second act, which we may observe is thus made to consist of only a single scene; an absurdity which need not be pointed out to the judicious reader. The chorus, in this song, struck by the piety and resolution of Electra, lament her condition, and blame the coldness of Chrysothemis, who had refused to join her in revenging the death of their father.

STROPHE II.

Still are the virtuous and the good
 By adverse fortune unsubdu'd,
 Nor e'er will stoop to infamy and shame;
 Thus Electra dauntless 'rose
 The war to wage with virtue's foes,
 To gain the meed of never-ending fame.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Far, far above thy enemies,
 In pow'r and splendor may'st thou rise,
 And future bliss compensate present woe!
 For thou hast shewn thy pious love,
 By all that's dear to heav'n above,
 Or sacred held by mortals here below.

[Exeunt.]

A C T IV.

SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES, (with ATTENDANTS)
 ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES.

SAY, virgins, if by right instruction led
 This way, I tend to-----

CHORUS.

Whither wou'dst thou go?

ORESTES.

The palace of Ægisthus.

CHORUS.

Stranger, well

Wert thou directed; thou art there already.

ORES.

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

Who then amongst your train shall kindly speak
A friend's approach, who comes with joyful news
Of highest import?

CHORUS.

Be that office her's, [pointing to Electra.
Whom bound by nature's ties it best befits.

ORESTES.

Go then, and say from Phocis are arriv'd
Who beg admittance to the king.

ELECTRA.

Alas!

And com'st thou then to prove the dreadful tale
Already told?

ORESTES.

What you have heard I know not,
But of Orestes came I hear to speak
By Strophius's command.

ELECTRA.

What is it, say;
O how I dread thy message!

ORESTES. [shewing the Urn.

Here behold

His poor remains.

ELECTRA.

O! lost, undone Electra!

'Tis then too plain, and mis'ry is compleat.

ORES-

What you have heard I know not. To prevent any suspicion of fraud or connivance, Orestes pretends to be an utter stranger to the message brought by the governor. The news coming thus by different hands, and at different times, confirms the report more strongly, and heightens the surprise at the discovery.

ORESTES.

If for Orestes thus thy sorrows flow,
Know that within this urn his ashes lye.

ELECTRA.

Do they indeed? then let me, by the gods
I do intreat thee, let me snatch them from thee,
Let me embrace them, let me weep my fate,
And mourn our hapless race.

ORESTES.

Give her the urn,

Whoe'er she be; for not with hostile mind
She craves the boon; perhaps some friend, perhaps
By blood united.

ELECTRA. [taking the Urn.

O! ye dear remains

Of my Orestes, the most lov'd of men!
How do I see thee now! how much unlike
What my fond hopes presag'd, when last we parted!
I sent thee forth with all the bloom of youth
Fresh on thy cheek, and now, O! dismal change!
I bear thee in these hands an empty shade.
Wou'd I had dy'd e'er I had sent thee hence,
E'er I had sav'd thee from the tyrant's hand!
Wou'd thou had'st dy'd thyself that dreadful day,
And join'd thy murther'd father in the tomb,
Rather than thus a wretched exile fall'n,
Far from thy sister, in a foreign land!
I was not there with pious hands to wash

Thy

Whoe'er she be. Orestes must already imagine, that the person he talked to was one of his sisters; but as he had been so long absent could not be sure that it was Electra; the chorus soon after puts him out of doubt by mentioning her name.

Thy breathless corps, or from the greedy flame
 To gather up thy ashes; what have all
 My pleasing toils, my fruitless cares avail'd,
 E'en from thy infant years, that as a mother
 I watch'd thee still, and as a mother lov'd?
 I wou'd not trust thee to a servant's hand,
 But was myself the guardian of thy youth,
 Thy dear companion; all is gone with thee;
 Alas! thy death, like the devouring storm,
 Hath borne down all; my father is no more,
 And thou art gone, and I am going too;
 Our foes rejoice; our mother, mad with joy,
 Smiles at our mis'ries; that unnat'ral mother,
 She whom thou hast promis'd to destroy;
 But cruel fate hath blasted all my hopes,
 And for my dear Orestes left me nought
 But this poor shadow: O! th' accursed place,
 Where I had sent thee! O! my hapless brother,
 Thou hast destroy'd Electra; take me then,
 O! take me to thee! let this urn enclose
 My ashes too, and dust to dust be join'd,

That

To wash thy breathless corps. The custom of washing the body of the deceased is very ancient; this office was always performed by the nearest relations; Socrates, as we are informed by Plato, wash'd himself before his execution, probably to prevent its being done by strangers; Alcestis, likewise, in Euripides, after she had determined to dye for her husband, washes herself. The Romans adopted this custom from the Greeks; and we find the mother of Euryalus, making the same complaint as Electra,

Nec te tua funera mater

Produxi pressive oculos aut vulnera lavi.

VIRG. ÆN. l. 9.

Dust to dust. In the original, it is *τὴν ὑπὸ τοῖς ποσσὶν*, nothing

That we may dwell together once again ;
 In life united by one hapless fate,
 I wou'd not wish in death to be divided ;
 The dead are free from sorrows.

CHORUS.

Fair Electra !

Do not indulge thy griefs ; but, O ! remember,
 Sprung from a mortal like thyself, Orestes
 Was mortal too, that we are mortal all.

ORESTES. [aside.]

What shall I say ? I can refrain no longer.

ELECTRA.

Why this emotion.

[looking at Electra.]

ORESTES.

Can it be Electra ?

That lovely form ?

ELECTRA.

It is indeed that wretch.

ORESTES.

O ! dreadful !

ELECTRA.

Stranger, dost thou weep for me ?

ORESTES.

By impious hands to perish thus !

ELECTRA.

For me

Doubtless thou weep'st, for I am chang'd indeed.

ORES.

" nothing to nothing ;" I have taken the liberty to adopt a phrase familiar to ourselves, and which equally expresses the sense of my author.

ORESTES.

Of nuptial rites, and each domestic joy
To live depriv'd!

ELECTRA.

Why dost thou gaze upon me?

ORESTES.

Alas! I did not know I was so wretched!

ELECTRA.

Why, what hath made thee so?

ORESTES.

I see thy woes!

ELECTRA.

Not half of them.

ORESTES.

Can there be worse than these?

ELECTRA.

To live with murderers!

ORESTES.

What murth'ers, whom?

ELECTRA.

The murth'ers of my father; bound to serve them.

ORESTES.

Who binds thee?

ELECTRA.

One who calls herself a mother;

A name she little merits.

ORESTES.

But say, how?

Doth she withhold the means of life, or act

With brutal violence to thee?

ELECTRA.

Both, alas!

Are

ELECTRA.

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Are my hard lot; she tries a thousand means
To make me wretched.

ORESTES.

And will none assist,
Will none defend thee?

ELECTRA.

None. My only hope
Lies buried there.

ORESTES.

O! how I pity thee!

ELECTRA.

'Tis kindly done; for none will pity me,
None but thyself; art thou indeed a stranger,
Or doth some nearer tie unite our sorrows?

ORESTES.

I cou'd unfold a tale; ----but, say, these virgins,
May I depend on them?

ELECTRA.

They are our friends,
And faithful all.

ORESTES.

Then lay the urn aside,
And I will tell thee.

ELECTRA.

Do not take it from me;
Do not, dear stranger.

ORESTES.

But I must indeed.

ELECTRA.

Do not, I beg thee.

ORESTES.

Come, you'll not repent it.

K

ELEC-

ELECTRA.

O! my poor brother! if thy dear remains
Are wrested from me, I am most unhappy.

ORESTES.

No more; thou must not grieve for him.

ELECTRA.

Not grieve

For my Orestes?

ORESTES.

No; you shou'd not weep.

ELECTRA.

Am I unworthy of him then?

ORESTES.

O! no!

But do not grieve.

ELECTRA.

Not when I bear the ashes

Of my dear brother!

ORESTES.

But they are not there,

Unless by fiction, and a well-wrought tale.

That hath deceiv'd thee.

ELECTRA.

Where then is his tomb?

ORESTES.

The living need none.

ELECTRA.

Ha! what say'st thou?

ORES-

The living need none. The Greek is τῶ ζωντῶν οὐκ ἐστὶ τάφος, which I have translated literally. Brumöy, who is seldom guilty of mistakes, has let the sense slip him, and only says, "il est plein de vie."

A J A X.

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O R E S T E S.

Truth.

E L E C T R A.

Does he then live?

O R E S T E S.

If I have life, he lives.

E L E C T R A.

And art thou he?

O R E S T E S.

Look here, and be convinc'd;

This mark, 'tis from our father.

E L E C T R A.

O! blest hour!

O R E S T E S.

Blessed indeed!

E L E C T R A.

Art thou then here?

K 2

O R E S-

This mark. What this mark was, has greatly puzzled the commentators; the scholiasts, whose conjectures are generally whimsical, will needs have it to be some remains of the ivory shoulder of Pelops, which was visible in all his descendants, as those of Cadmus were marked with a lance, and the Seleucidæ with an anchor. Camerarius, and after him Brumoy, call it a ring, or seal, which indeed is the most natural interpretation of the Greek word *σφραγίς*; though it may be said, in support of the other opinion, that the natural or bodily mark was more certain, and therefore a better proof of identity in regard to the person of Orestes.

Art thou then here? This discovery is doubtless the principal and most interesting scene in the tragedy of Electra, and upon the whole much better conducted by Sophocles than by either of his rivals on the same subject. The effect which it had upon the audience, was, we may imagine, equal to its merit. Aulus Gellius tells us a remarkable story of a certain actor, named Polus, who having undertaken

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

I am.

ELECTRA.

Do I embrace thee?

ORESTES.

May'st thou do it long!

ELECTRA.

O! my companions! O! my dearest friends!

Do ye not see Orestes, once by art

And cruel fiction torn from life and me,

But now by better art to life restor'd?

CHORUS.

Daughter, we do; and see 'midst all our woes

From ev'ry eye fast flow the tears of joy.

ELECTRA.

O! ye are come, my friends, in happiest hour,

Ev'n to behold, to find again the man

Whom your souls wish'd for, ye are come.

CHORUS.

dertaken the part of Electra, in order to enter more fully into the character he was to represent, brought upon the stage an urn containing the ashes of his own son, which he wept over and embraced as the ashes of Orestes; his feelings were so intense, and his performance so exquisite on this occasion, that the spectators no longer considered it as a mere representation, but were fill'd with real grief, and dissolved in tears.

Dacier is of opinion, that the dialogue between Orestes and Electra on this occasion, is too prolix, and must be shorten'd before it could meet with any applause on a modern theatre.

O! ye are come, &c. From this place, to that speech of Orestes which begins with, *spend not thy time, &c.* and which contains in the Greek near fifty short lines, the original is in Strophe and Antistrophe: I have made no change in the measure of the translation, for the reason given in a preceding note.

ELECTRA.

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CHORUS.

We are ;

But O ! in silence hide thy joys, Electra.

ELECTRA.

Wherefore in silence ?

CHORUS.

Lest our foes within

Shou'd hear thee.

ELECTRA.

Never, by the virgin pow'r

Of chaste Diana, will I hide my joys,

Nor meanly stoop to fear an idle throng

Of helpless women.

ORESTES.

Women have their pow'r,

And that thou know'st.

ELECTRA.

Alas ! and so I do ;

For O ! thou hast call'd back the sad remembrance

Of that misfortune which admits no cure,

And ne'er can be forgot.

ORESTES.

A fitter time

May come when we must think of that.

ELECTRA.

All times,

All hours are fit to talk of justice in,

And best the present, now when I am free.

ORESTES.

Thou art so, be so still.

ELECTRA.

What's to be done ?

ELECTRA.

ORESTES.

Talk not, when prudence shou'd restrain thy tongue.

ELECTRA.

Who shall restrain it? who shall bind Electra

To fearful silence, when Orestes comes?

When thus I see thee here, beyond my thoughts,

Beyond my hopes.

ORESTES.

The gods have sent me to thee;

They bad me come.

ELECTRA.

Indeed? more grateful still

Is thy return; if by the gods command

Thou cam'st, the gods will sure protect thee here.

ORESTES.

I wou'd not damp thy joys, and yet I fear

Left they shou'd carry thee too far.

ELECTRA.

O! no!

But after so long absence, thus return'd

To thy afflicted sister; sure thou wou'd'st not-----

ORESTES.

Do what?

ELECTRA.

Thou wou'd'st not grudge me the dear pleasure

Of looking on thee.

ORESTES.

No; nor suffer any

To rob thee of it.

ELECTRA.

Shall I then!

ORESTES.

No doubt.

ELEC-

ELECTRA.

I hear that voice, my friends, I never thought
To hear again; ye know, when I receiv'd
The dreadful news, I kept my grief within,
Silent and sad; but now I have thee here,
Now I behold thee, now I fix my eyes
On that dear form, which never was forgotten.

ORESTES.

Spend not thy time in fruitless words, nor tell me
How Clytæmnestra lives, nor how Ægisthus
Hath lavish'd all our wealth; the present hour
Demands our strict attention; tell me how,
Whether by fraud, or open force, our foes
May best be vanquish'd; let no chearful smile
Betray thee to thy mother; seem to grieve
As thou wert wont; when we have done the deed,
Joy shall appear, and we will smile in safety.

ELECTRA.

Thy will is mine; not to myself I owe
My present bliss, I have it all from thee,
From thee, my brother; nor shou'd aught persuade me
To give Orestes ev'n a moments pain.
That were ungrateful to th' indulgent pow'r,
Who thus hath smil'd propitious. Know, Ægisthus
Has left the palace; Clytæmnestra's there;
And for thy needless fears that I shou'd smile,
Or wear a chearful face, I never shall;
Hatred so strong is rooted in my soul,
The sight of them will make me sad enough.
The tears of joy perhaps may flow for thee,
And add to the deceit; for flow they must,
When I behold thee in one happy hour
Thus snatch'd from life, and thus to life restor'd.

I cou'd not hope it; O! 'tis passing strange!
 If from the tomb our father shou'd arise,
 And say he liv'd, I think I shou'd believe him;
 And O! when thou art come so far, 'tis fit
 I yield to thee in all, do thou direct
 My ev'ry step; but know, had I been left
 Alone, ev'n I wou'd not have fail'd in all,
 But conquer'd bravely, or as bravely fell.

O R E S T E S.

No more. I hear the footsteps as of one
 Coming this way.

E L E C T R A.

Strangers, go in, and bear
 That which with joy they cannot but receive,
 But which with joy they will not long possess.

SCENE II.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ELECTRA,
 ORESTES, CHORUS.

G O V E R N O R.

Madness and folly thus to linger here!
 Have ye no thought? is life not worth your care?
 Do ye not know the dangers that surround you?
 Had I not watch'd myself before the palace,
 E'er ye had enter'd, all your secret plan
 Had been discover'd to our foes within;
 Wherefore no more of this tumultuous joy,

And

Strangers go in, &c. Electra, inform'd that some one was coming towards them, changes her tone and manner, and addresses Orestes and Pylades as strangers; what she says, we may observe, is purposely ambiguous, as she was apprehensive of being overheard.

And lengthen'd converse ; 'tis not fitting now,
Go in ; away, delays are dangerous
At such an hour ; our fate depends upon it.

ORESTES.

May I with safety ? is all well within ?

GOVERNOR.

None can suspect you.

ORESTES.

Spake you of my death

As we determin'd ?

GOVERNOR.

Living as thou art,

They do account thee one among the dead.

ORESTES.

And are they glad ; what say they ?

GOVERNOR.

By and by

We'll talk of that ; let it suffice, that all

Is right within ; and that which most they think so,

May prove most fatal to them.

[pointing to the GOVERNOR.]

ELECTRA.

Who is this ?

ORESTES.

Do you not know ?

ELECTRA.

I cannot recollect him.

ORESTES.

Not know the man to whom you trusted me ?

Under whose care-----

ELECTRA.

When ? how ?

ORES-

O R E S T E S.

To Phocis sent,

I 'scap'd the tyrant.

E L E C T R A.

Can it then be he,

Among the faithless only faithful found

When our dear father fell?

O R E S T E S.

It is the same.

[to the GOVERNOR.]

E L E C T R A.

Dearest of men, great guardian of our race,

Art thou then here? thou, who hast sav'd us both

From countless woes; swift were thy feet to bring

Glad tidings to me, and thy hand stretch'd forth

It's welcome succour; but, O! why deceive me?

Why woud'st thou kill me with thy dreadful tale,

Ev'n when thou had'st such happiness in store?

Hail! father, hail! for I must call thee so,

Know, thou hast been to me, in one short day,

Both the most hated, and most lov'd of men.

G O V E R N O R.

No more of that; we shall have time enough

To talk of it hereafter; let us go;

This is the hour; the queen is now alone,

And not a man within; if ye delay,

Expect to meet more formidable foes,

In wisdom and in numbers far superior.

O R E S-

Swift were thy feet, &c. The expression in the original is remarkable, ἡδίστον εἶχον ποδῶν ὑπηρετήματα, dulcissimum habens pedum ministerium; not unlike that of the prophet Isaiah, "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings!"

ORESTES.

We will not talk, my Pylades, but act.

Let us go in ; but to the gods, who guard

This place, be first due adoration paid.

ELECTRA.

Hear then, Apollo, great Lycæan, hear

Their humble pray'r ! O ! hear Electra too,

Who with unsparing hand her choicest gifts

Hath never fail'd to lay before thy altars ;

Accept the little all which now remains

For me to give, accept my humblest pray'rs,

My vows, my adorations ; smile propitious

On all our counsels ! O ! assist us now,

And shew mankind what punishment remains

For guilty mortals from offended heav'n.

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Behold, he comes ! the slaughter-breathing god

Mais, ever thirsting for the murth'rer's blood ;

And

Hear then, Apollo, &c. Electra's prayer is made before the altar of Apollo, which stood at the entrance of the palace, where Clytemnestra had paid her devotions in the former scene ; this gives an air of solemnity to the action, and lessens the horror of the murder, by representing it as an act of piety, and agreeable to the will of heaven.

Behold he comes, &c. This is the fourth intermede or song of the chorus, and is supposed to divide the fourth and the fifth acts ; it is shorter, we may observe, than any of the rest, probably so contrived by the author, to relieve the impatience of the Spectator, who is naturally eager to see the catastrophe ; it is not therefore a time to amuse him with poetry and description, but to prepare him for the event ; which is here done in a few words, finely adapted to that purpose.

And, see, the dogs of war are close behind;
 Nought can escape their all-devouring rage;
 This did my conscious heart long since presage,
 And the fair dream that struck my raptur'd mind.

A N T I S T R O P H E.

Th' avenger steals along with silent feet,
 And sharpen'd sword, to his paternal seat,
 His injur'd father's wrongs to vindicate;
 Conceal'd from all by Maia's fraudulent son,
 Who safe conducts him till the deed be done,
 Nor longer will delay the needful work of fate.

[Exit.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

O! my dear friends, they are about it now,
 The deed is doing: but be still.

C H O-

The dogs of war. ΚΥΕΣ ἀπυκτοι, gr. canes inevitabiles. Shakespear has exactly the same image, "Cry havoc, and let slip the
 "dogs of war."

See prologue to Henry the fifth.

Maia's fraudulent son. Mercury was the god of fraud and treachery, and called Δολος, or the deceiver; to him therefore was attributed all secret schemes and expeditions, good or bad. The propriety of Mercury's peculiar assistance in this place, may likewise be accounted for from his relation to Myrtilus, who was slain by Pelops.

O my dear friends, &c. To avoid the horror of a murder on the stage, which, however familiar to us, the ancients considered as shocking and disgustful, Sophocles has contrived that it shall be done
 within

ELECTRA.

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CHORUS.

What deed?

How? where?

ELECTRA.

She doth prepare the fun'ral banquet;
But they are not far from her.

CHORUS.

Why then leave them?

ELECTRA.

To watch Ægisthus, lest he steal upon us
And blast our purpose.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

[Behind the scenes.]

O! I am betray'd!

My palace full of murth'ers; not a friend
Left to protect me.

ELEC-

within the palace; but as Electra had received no commands from the oracle to revenge the death of Agamemnon, there would have been an indecency and impropriety in making her a witness or accessary to the murder: she therefore leaves her brother to kill Clytæmnestra, and comes out; which at the same time gives her an opportunity of watching the arrival of Ægisthus, and preventing any interruption from him. The appearance of Electra on the stage in this place is absolutely necessary, as without it no reason could be assigned for the return of Orestes; and thus the rest of the business of the drama must have been transacted out of sight of the audience, who would consequently remain strangers to the catastrophe.

The fun'ral banquet. The Greek λεβητα κοσμι, lebetem parat, alluding to the περιδειπνον, or funeral banquet, which was usually spread on the tomb of the deceased by the nearest relation. This banquet Electra imagines that Clytæmnestra was already preparing for Orestes, whom she supposed dead: but they, says she, are not far from her; that is, they who are preparing one for her. The sentence, we see, is purposely left unfinished.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

Some one cries within ;
Did you not hear ?

CHORUS.

It is too horrible
For mortal ear ; I tremble at the sound.

[within]

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Ægisthus, O ! where art thou ?

ELECTRA.

Hark ! again

The voice, and louder.

[within.]

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

O ! my child, my child !

Pity thy mother, pity her who bore thee.

ELECTRA.

Be thine the pity which thou shew'd'st to him,
And to his father.

CHORUS.

O ! unhappy kingdom !

O!

Some one cries within. Dacier puts these words into the mouth of one of the women that compose the chorus ; because, (says he) Electra would never have said "*some one* cries out," as she knew it must be Clytæmnestra. The reader may take his choice in regard to this alteration ; I have left it as it stands in the original, being a matter of no great consequence.

O ! unhappy kingdom ! The chorus, though satisfied that Clytæmnestra deserved to die, and that this action of Orestes was commanded by the gods, are notwithstanding shock'd at the execution of it : they lament the present, and express their fear of future miseries in the house of Pelops : it is impossible, in their opinion, that a family

O! wretched race! thy misery is full;
This day will finish all.

[within]

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

O! I am wounded!

ELECTRA.

Another stroke. Another, if thou can'st.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Ah me! again!

ELEC-

mily could ever prosper where a wife had killed her husband, and a child murdered his mother. There is something in this reflection striking and pathetic.

Another stroke, &c. "Ce mot fait fremir," (says Brumoy) "these words make one shudder." Dacier is likewise of opinion, that all the art of the poet is insufficient to reconcile us to the fierceness of Electra. We cannot, (say these gentlemen) hear without horror a sister exhorting her brother to murder her own mother; nature starts at such inhumanity: Orestes should be revenged, but by some other hand. These, and many other accusations of the same kind, are brought against Sophocles, who stands indicted of cruelty by the French critics: their delicacy is, it seems, greatly shock'd at what they call the atrocity of the action. I am notwithstanding of opinion, that the more indulgent English reader will acquit the poet, when he considers the manners and character of the people before whom the play was represented. The murder of Clytæmnestra, we are frequently put in mind, was by command of the oracle; and was therefore looked on by the ancients, however contrary to the dictates of nature, as an act of piety. Their idea of fatality was, of itself, sufficient to take away all the horror and cruelty of it; besides which, it may be added in favour of Sophocles, that the story of Clytæmnestra, the persons concerned in her death, and every circumstance attending it, was too well known to the whole audience, to admit of any material alteration in the conduct of it.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

O! that Ægisthus too

Groan'd with thee now!

CHORUS.

Then vengeance is compleat.

The dead arise and shed their murth'ers blood

In copious streams.

SCENE II.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of
ORESTES.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

Behold them here; their hands

Dropping with gore, a pious sacrifice

To the great god of war. How is't, Orestes?

ORESTES.

'Tis very well; all's well, if there be truth

In great Apollo's oracles, she's dead.

Thou need'st not fear a cruel mother now.

CHORUS.

No more; Ægisthus comes.

ELECTRA.

Instant go in;

Do you not see him? joyful he returns.

CHORUS.

Retire; thus far is right, go on, and prosper.

ORESTES.

Fear not, we'll do it.

CHORUS.

But immediately.

ORESTES.

I'm gone.

[Exeunt Orestes, Pylades, and Gov.]

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

For what remains here to be done,
Be it my care; I'll whisper in his ear
A few soft flatt'ring words, that he may rush
Unknowing down precipitate on ruin.

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS.

Which of you knows ought of these Phocian guests,
Who come to tell us of Orestes' death?
You first I ask, Electra, once so proud
And fierce of soul; it doth concern you most;
And therefore you, I think, can best inform me.

ELECTRA.

Yes, I can tell thee; is it possible
I shou'd not know it? that were not to know
A circumstance of dearest import to me.

ÆGISTHUS.

Where are they then?

ELECTRA.

Within.

ÆGISTHUS.

And spake they truth?

ELECTRA.

They did; a truth not prov'd by words alone,
But facts undoubted.

L

ÆGIST-

Which of you knows, &c. Clytæmnestra, we are to suppose, on receiving the news of Orestes's death, had sent a message to Ægisthus to acquaint him with it; he returns home therefore immediately to enquire into the particulars.

ELECTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

Shall we see him then?

ELECTRA.

Ay, and a dreadful fight it is to see.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou art not wont to give me so much joy;
Now I am glad indeed.

ELECTRA.

Glad may'st thou be,

If aught there is in that can give thee joy.

ÆGISTHUS.

Silence within, and let my palace gates
Be open'd all; that Argos and Mycenæ
May send her millions forth to view the fight;
And if there are who nourish idle hopes
That still Orestes lives, behold him here,
And learn submission, nor inflame the croud
Against their lawful sov'reign, lest they feel
An angry monarch's heaviest vengeance on them.

ELECTRA.

Already I have learn'd the task, and yield
To pow'r superior.

SCENE

Glad may'st thou be. This speech of Electra, as well as that which goes before it, is purposely ambiguous; Ægisthus believes she is talking of Orestes, whilst she speaks of Clytæmnestra.

S C E N E IV.

Opens and discovers the body of CLYTÆMNESTRA extended on a bier, and cover'd with a veil,

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS, and a croud of SPECTATORS from the city.

ÆGISTHUS.

What a fight is here!

O! deity supreme! this cou'd not be
But by thy will; and whether Nemesis
Shall still o'ertake me for my crime, I know not.
Take off the veil, that I may view him well;
He was by blood ally'd, and therefore claims
Our decent sorrows.

ORESTES.

Take it off thyself;
'Tis not my office; thee it best befits
To see and to lament.

ÆGISTHUS.

And so it does;
And I will do it; send Clytæmnestra hither.

[taking-off the veil.

L 2

ORES-

This cou'd not be. The Greek is *καταρκετο*, which, literally translated, answers exactly to our phrase, "it did not fall out."

'Tis not my office. All duties paid to the dead were perform'd by the nearest relations; Orestes, as supposed to be a stranger, had no business with them; Ægisthus therefore, himself, takes off the veil, which greatly heightens the surprize and horror of the catastrophe.

ORESTES.

She is before thee.

ÆGISTHUS.

Ha! what do I see?

ORESTES.

Why, what's the matter? what affrights thee so?

Do you not see him?

ÆGISTHUS.

In what dreadful snare

Am I then fallen?

ORESTES.

Dost thou not now behold

That thou art talking with the dead?

ÆGISTHUS.

Alas!

Too

She is before thee. Of all the catastrophes, antient or modern, which I remember to have met with, this of *Electra* appears to me infinitely the most interesting, natural, and truly dramatic. There cannot possibly be a spectacle more affecting than the scene before us; a tyrant, murderer, and adulterer, is represented as exulting on the death of the only person in the world whom he had to fear, and whose dead body he expects to see before him; instead of this, on lifting up the veil, he is shock'd, not with the corps of *Orestes*, but that of his own wife; he perceives at once that *Clytæmnestra* is murder'd, that *Orestes* is alive and close to him, and that he has nothing to expect himself but immediate death: the sudden change of fortune to all the persons concern'd, the surprise and despair of *Ægisthus*, the joy and triumph in the countenances of *Orestes* and *Electra*, must altogether have exhibited a picture worthy the pencil of a *Raphael* to execute: how it was acted on the Greek stage, we cannot pretend to determine, most probably with taste and judgment. Let the English reader conceive those inimitable actors, *Quin*, *Garrick*, and *Cibber* in the parts of *Ægisthus*, *Orestes*, and *Electra*, and from thence form to himself some idea of the effect which such a catastrophe would have on a British audience.

Too well I see it, and thou art----Orestes.

O R E S T E S.

So great a prophet thou, and gueſs ſo ill!

Æ G I S T H U S.

I know that I am loſt, undone for ever;

But let me ſpeak to thee.

E L E C T R A.

Do not, Oreſtes;

No, not a word; what can a moment's ſpace

Proſit a wretch like him to death devoted?

Quick let him dye, and caſt his carcaſe forth

To dogs and vultures; they will beſt perform

Fit obſequies for him: by this alone

We can be free and happy.

O R E S T E S.

Get thee in;

This is no time for talk; thy life, thy life.

Æ G I S T H U S.

But why go in? if what thou mean'ſt to do

Be juſt, what need of darkneſs to conceal it?

Why not deſtroy me here?

O R E S T E S.

It is not thine

L 3

Now

So great a prophet, &c. This is a ſheer of Oreſtes, on his being diſcovered by Ægiſthus, who had the reputation of a prophet.

They will beſt perform, &c. Amongſt the Greeks, to be deprived of the rites of ſepulture, was accounted a puniſhment worſe than death itſelf. The original doth not mention dogs and vultures, but only ſays, let him be given *ταφῆσιν*, ſolis pollinctoribus vel libitinariis, to the only buriers (if we may uſe the expreſſion) that he deſerves.

Now to command : hence to the fatal place
Where our dear father fell, and perish there.

ÆGISTHUS.

This palace then is doom'd to be the witness
Of all the present, all the future woes
Of Pelops' hapless race.

ORESTES.

Of thine, at least

It shall be witness ; that's my prophecy,
And a most true one.

ÆGISTHUS.

'Tis not from thy father.

ORESTES.

Thou talk'st, and time is lost. Away.

ÆGISTHUS.

I follow.

O R E S -

Hence to the fatal place, &c. Ægisthus must be slain on the very spot where he killed Agamemnon ; this heightens the justice of the action, and at the same time prevents the spilling of blood on the stage, which Sophocles judiciously avoids. The justice of Orestes puts us in mind of a similar passage in holy writ, " in the place " where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy " blood, even thine."

See 1 Kings, xxi. 19.

Of thine at least, &c. The antients were of opinion, that the words of dying men were always prophetic ; Ægisthus therefore, perceiving that his death was determined, foretells the fate of Orestes, doom'd to be tormented for the murder of his mother ; Orestes interrupts his speech, by assuring him that his own fate was unavoidable : the English reader will recollect a parallel passage in Shakespear, where Richard the third cuts off the prophecies of Henry the sixth, with

-----Die, prophet, in thy speech ;

For this among the rest was I ordain'd.

ELECTRA.

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ORESTES.

Thou shalt go first.

ÆGISTHUS.

Think'st thou I mean to fly?

ORESTES.

No; but I'd make thy end most bitter to thee
In ev'ry circumstance, nor let thee choose
The softest means. Were all like thee to perish
Who violate the laws, 'twou'd lessen much
The guilt of mortals, and reform mankind.

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

O! race of Atreus! after all thy woes,
How art thou thus by one advent'rous deed
To freedom and to happiness restor'd!

FINIS.

ELLECTRA

OR ESTES
Then shall go forth
EGISTHUS

Think'st thou I mean to fly?
OR ESTES

No; but I eagerly and weakly strive to live
In every circumstance, and let the choice
The lot of fate decide. We are all like thee to perish
Who violate the laws, whose lot is death
The guilt of mortals; and return mankind.

EGISTHUS
CHORUS

O race of Atreus! what all thy woes
Now are thou thus by one adventer lost?
To thyself and to thy nation's fate?

EGISTHUS

EGISTHUS

EGISTHUS

EGISTHUS

EGISTHUS

EGISTHUS

EGISTHUS

Dramatis Personæ.

ULYSSES, king of Ithaca.

NEOPTOLEMUS, son of Achilles.

PHILOCTETES, son of Peleus and Heracles.

HERMES, god of thieves and horses.

A SENECA

PHILOCTETES.

CHORUS

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SCENE I. A grove, in a rock, in the island.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, HERMES.

ULYSSES. (To Neoptolemus.) O my son, I have a task for thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS. What task, my father? I am at thy service.

ULYSSES. I have a bow and arrow, which I have found in a cave.

NEOPTOLEMUS. A bow and arrow? What is it for?

ULYSSES. It is a bow and arrow, which I have found in a cave.

NEOPTOLEMUS. A bow and arrow? What is it for?

ULYSSES. It is a bow and arrow, which I have found in a cave.

NEOPTOLEMUS. A bow and arrow? What is it for?

ULYSSES. It is a bow and arrow, which I have found in a cave.

NEOPTOLEMUS. A bow and arrow? What is it for?

Dramatis Personæ.

ULYSSES, king of Ithaca.

NEOPTOLEMUS, son of Achilles.

PHILOCTETES, son of Pæan and companion
of Hercules.

A SPY.

HERCULES.

CHORUS,

Composed of the companions of ULYSSES and
NEOPTOLEMUS.

SCENE Lemnos, near a grotto, in a rock by the sea-side.

PHILOCTETES.

A C T I.

S C E N E I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, ATTENDANT.

U L Y S S E S.

AT length, my noble friend, thou bravest son
Of a brave father, father of us all,
The great Achilles, we have reach'd the shore
Of sea-girt Lemnos, desert and forlorn,
Where never tread of human step is seen,
Or voice of mortal heard, save his alone,
Poor Philoctetes, Pæan's wretched son,

Whom

Poor Philoctetes, &c. It is reported of Philoctetes, that Hercules, at his death on mount Hyllus, bequeath'd to him, as a testimony of his esteem, his bow and arrows; the extraordinary virtues of which we shall find frequently alluded to in this piece. Philoctetes after this, being in search of an altar dedicated to his deceased friend, in the island of Chrysa, was there bit by a serpent; the wound fester'd. and an incurable ulcer ensued, notwithstanding which he proceeded in his voyage to assist at the siege of Troy; where the wound growing desperate, his continual cries and groans interrupted the motions of the war, and probably disheartened the soldiers; the Grecian chiefs therefore thought it adviseable to remove him from the army. A superstitious belief was instilled into the multitude, that Philoctetes was struck by the hand of the gods with an incurable distemper;

156 PHILOCTETES.

Whom here I left; for such were my commands
From Grecia's chiefs, when by his fatal wound
Oppress'd, his groans and execrations dreadful
Alarm'd our hosts, our sacred rites profan'd,
And interrupted holy sacrifice.

But why shou'd I repeat the tale? the time
Admits not of delay, we must not linger,
Lest he discover our arrival here,
And all our purpos'd fraud to draw him hence
Be ineffectual; lend me then thy aid:
Surveying round thee, canst thou see a rock
With double entrance; to the sun's warm rays
In winter open, and in summer's heat
Giving free passage to the welcome breeze?
A little to the left, there is a fountain

Of

per; and Ulysses was ordered to carry him to Lemnos, an uninhabited island in the Ægean sea, and leave him there to the care of providence. In this miserable situation he remained for ten years; the Greeks in the mean time are informed by an oracle, that Troy could never be conquered without the arrows of Hercules, then in the possession of Philoctetes. Ulysses and Neoptolemus are dispatch'd with commands to bring him to the siege. The manner in which this expedition was conducted, and the means made use of by the artful Ulysses to gain the arrows of Hercules, constitute the subject of the tragedy; which, though extremely barren of dramatic incidents, and divested of every theatrical ornament, abounds at the same time in such amiable simplicity, such strength of colouring, and propriety of character and manners, as may, perhaps, render it even more pleasing to the judicious and classical reader, than those plays of Sophocles, where the fable is apparently more interesting; and the manners much more similar to our own. The celebrated archbishop of Cambray was so struck with the story of Philoctetes, that he has taken the pains to weave it into his excellent work, where it forms a very beautiful episode,

See Telemaque, b. 15.

Of living water, where, if yet he breathes
He slakes his thirst; if aught thou see'st of this,
Inform me; so shall each to each impart
Council most fit, and serve our common cause.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[leaving Ulysses a little behind him.

If I mistake not, I behold a cave,
Ev'n such as thou describ'ft.

ULYSSES.

Dost thou? which way?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Yonder it is; but no path leading thither,
Or trace of human footstep.

ULYSSES.

In his cell

A chance but he hath lain him down to rest;
Look if he hath not.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[advancing towards the cave.

Not a creature there.

ULYSSES.

Nor food, nor mark of household preparation?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

A rustic bed of scatter'd leaves.

ULYSSES.

What more?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

A wooden bowl, the work of some rude hand,
With a few sticks for fuel.

ULYSSES.

This is all

His little treasure here.

NEOP-

158 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Unhappy man !

Some linen for his wounds.

ULYSSES.

This must be then

His place of habitation ; far from hence

He cannot roam ; distemper'd as he is,

It were impossible ; he is but gone

A little way for needful food, or herb

Of pow'r to 'swage and mitigate his pain.

Wherefore dispatch this servant to some place

Of observation, whence he may espy

His ev'ry motion, lest he rush upon us.

There's not a Grecian whom his foul so much

Cou'd wish to crush beneath him as Ulysses.

[Makes a signal to the attendant, who retires.

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, ULYSSES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He's gone to guard each avenue ; and now,

If thou hast aught of moment to impart

Touching our purpose, say it ; I attend.

ULYSSES.

Son of Achilles, mark me well ; remember,

What we are doing not on strength alone,

Or courage, but on conduct will depend ;

Therefore if aught uncommon be propos'd,

Strange to thy ears, and adverse to thy nature,

Reflect that 'tis thy duty to comply,

And act conjunctive with me.

NEOP-

PHILOCTETES. 139

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well! what is it?

ULYSSES.

We must deceive this Philoctetes; that
Will be thy task; when he shall ask thee who
And what thou art, Achilles' son, reply;
Thus far within the verge of truth, no more;
Add, that resentment fir'd thee to forsake
The Grecian fleet, and seek thy native soil,
Unkindly us'd by those who long with vows
Had sought thy aid to humble haughty Troy,
And when thou cam'st, ungrateful as they were,
The arms of great Achilles, thy just right,
Gave to Ulysses; here thy bitter taunts
And sharp invectives lib'rally bestow
On me; say what thou wilt, I shall forgive,
And Greece will not forgive thee if thou dost not;
For against Troy thy efforts are all vain
Without his arrows: safely thou may'st hold
Friendship and converse with him, but I cannot.
Thou wert not with us when the war began,
Nor bound by solemn oath to join our host
As I was; me he knows, and if he find
That I am with thee, we are both undone.
They must be ours then, these all-conqu'ring arms;

Remember

The arms of great Achilles. The contest concerning the arms of Achilles, was solely between Ajax and Ulysses; we have no account that Neoptolemus laid claim to them. As Philoctetes, however, had been absent during the whole affair, Ulysses was at liberty to substitute Neoptolemus in the room of Ajax, especially as his being the son of Achilles, naturally justified his pretensions to the arms of his father; the fiction therefore was probable.

These all-conquering arms. A dispute concerning a bow and arrows

160 PHILOCTETES.

Remember that. I know, thy noble nature
 Abhors the thought of treachery or fraud ;
 But what a glorious prize is victory !
 Therefore be bold ; we will be just hereafter.
 Give to deceit and me a little portion
 Of one short day, and for thy future life
 Be call'd the holiest, worthiest, best of men.
 NEOPTOLEMUS.
 What but to hear alarms my conscious soul,
 Son of Laertes, I shall never practise.
 I was not born to flatter or betray ;
 Nor I, nor he (the voice of fame reports)
 Who gave me birth ; what open arms can do
 Behold me prompt to act, but ne'er to fraud.
 Will I descend ; sure we can more than match
 In strength a foe thus lame and impotent.
 I came to be a helpmate to thee, not

A base
 rows may probably seem to a modern critic but an unpromising subject for a tragedy ; but the defenders of Sophocles must desire him to recollect, that on those arrows, however uninteresting the circumstance may at first appear, depended no less than the fate of a whole nation ; politically consider'd therefore, it was a point of the utmost consequence ; if the poet had not thought so, he would certainly have been inexcusable in bringing down a deity at last, as we shall see in the catastrophe, to determine it.

We will be just hereafter. This advice is put with great propriety into the mouth of the artful Ulysses, who, like other subtle pandars to vice, persuades his friend to the commission of a crime, and at the same time proposes the palliative of future repentance and virtue ; an evasive and subtle excuse for guilt, which has perhaps done more injury to the cause of religion and truth than any other whatsoever. Neoptolemus answers it with all the honest indignation that such a sentiment deserved. The characters, we may observe, of the two heroes are finely contrasted, and serve, like light and shade, greatly to animate and enliven the whole beautiful picture.

A base betrayer; and O! king, believe me,
Rather, much rather would I fall by virtue,
Than rise by guilt to certain victory.

U L Y S S E S.

O! noble youth, and worthy of thy fire,
When I like thee was young, like thee of strength
And courage boastful, little did I deem
Of human policy; but long experience
Hath taught me, son, 'tis not the pow'rful arm
But soft enchanting tongue that governs all.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

And thou woud'st have me tell an odious falsehood?

U L Y S S E S.

He must be gain'd by fraud.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

By fraud? and why

Not by persuasion?

U L Y S S E S.

He'll not listen to it;

And force were vainer still.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

What mighty pow'r

Hath he to boast?

U L Y S S E S.

His arrows wing'd with death

Inevitable.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

Then it were not safe

Ev'n to approach him.

U L Y S S E S.

No; unless by fraud

He be secur'd.

M N E O P.

162 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And think'st thou 'tis not base
To tell a lye then?

ULYSSES.

Not if on that lye

Depends our safety.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Who shall dare to tell it

Without a blush?

ULYSSES.

We need not blush at aught

That may promote our int'rest and success.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But where's the int'rest that shou'd bias me?

Come he or not to Troy, imports it aught

To Neoptolemus?

ULYSSES.

Troy cannot fall

Without his arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Said'st thou not, that I

Was destin'd to destroy her?

ULYS-

Think'st thou 'tis not base, &c. The character of Neoptolemus is copied from that of his father, who is represented by Homer as of an open and ingenuous disposition, and a foe to lying and dissimulation; in the ninth book of the Iliad, he cries out,

Εχθρος γὰρ μοι κείνος ὅμως αἰδᾶο πύλησιν,

ὅς δ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθει ἐνὶ φρεσὶν, ἄλλο δὲ βάζει.

Who dares think one thing, and another tell,

My heart detests him as the gates of hell.

POPE.

words that deserve, though from a heathen writer, to be written in letters of gold, and graven, as Solomon says, in the tablets of the heart.

PHILOCTETES 163

U L Y S S E S.

Without them

Nought canst thou do, and they without thee nothing.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Then I must have them.

U L Y S S E S.

When thou hast, remember

A double prize awaits thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What, Ulysses?

U L Y S S E S.

The glorious names of valiant and of wise.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Away; I'll do it. Thoughts of guilt or shame

No more appall me.

U L Y S S E S.

Wilt thou do it then?

Wilt thou remember what I told thee of?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't; I have promis'd; that's sufficient.

U L Y S S E S.

Here then remain thou; I must not be seen;

If thou stay long, I'll send a faithful spy

Who in a sailor's habit well disguis'd

May pass unknown; of him, from time to time,

What best may suit our purpose thou shalt know.

I'll to the ship; farewell; and may the god

M 2

Who

Then I must have them. The struggle between ambition and virtue in the breast of Neoptolemus, is natural and affecting. The subtle Ulysses had discovered that his foible was the love of glory, and therefore attacks him in the only part where he was open to persuasion. The virtue of Neoptolemus staggers at the reward proposed, and he submits to a treachery which his soul abhors.

164 PHILOCTETES.

Who brought us here, the fraudulent Mercury,
And great Minerva, guardian of our country,
And ever kind to me, protect us still!

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.

CHORUS, NEOPTOLEMUS.

CHORUS.

Master, instruct us, strangers as we are,
What we may utter, what we must conceal.
Doubtless the man we seek will entertain
Suspicion of us; how are we to act?
To those alone belongs the art to rule
Who bear the scepter from the hand of Jove;
To thee of right devolves the pow'r supreme,
From thy great ancestors deliver'd down;
Speak then, our royal lord, and we obey.

NEOP-

The fraudulent Mercury. See note in *Electra*, p. 140.

Master, instruct us, &c. According to the original design of the chorus, their chief business was to take the part of distressed virtue; to counteract the bad effects that might arise from vicious characters, and to draw moral inferences from the action of the drama: they are generally therefore, as in the two preceding plays of *Ajax* and *Electra*, attendants on, and friends to the hero or heroine of the piece; a propriety which the subject of the tragedy before us would by no means admit, the distress of *Philoctetes* arising in a great measure from his being left alone in the island; the chorus, for this reason, is composed not of the friends of the hero, but the soldiers and followers of *Ulysses* and *Neoptolemus*; we must not be surprized therefore to find them conspiring with their masters to deceive *Philoctetes*, and throughout the play aiding and assisting the designs of their commanders; they, notwithstanding, perform the officium virile prescribed by *Horace*, and express their pity and concern for the man, whom it is not in their power to relieve.

PHILOCTETES. 165

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If you wou'd penetrate yon deep recess
To see the cave where Philoctetes lyes,
Go forward; but remember to return
When the poor wand'rer comes this way, prepar'd
To aid our purpose here, if need require.

CHORUS.

O! king, we ever meant to fix our eyes
On thee, and wait attentive to thy will;
But, tell us, in what part is he conceal'd?
'Tis fit we know the place, lest unobserv'd
He rush upon us; which way doth it lye?
See'lt thou his footsteps leading from the cave,
Or hither bent?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[advancing towards the cave.

Behold the double door

Of his poor dwelling, and the flinty bed.

CHORUS.

And whither is its wretched master gone?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Doubtless in search of food, and not far off;
For such his manner is; accusom'd here,
So fame reports, to pierce with winged arrows
His savage prey for daily sustenance,
His wound still painful, and no hope of cure.

CHORUS.

Alas! I pity him; without a friend,

M 3

Without

Alas! I pity him, &c. The lamentation of the chorus in this scene, as it stands in the original, is in Strophe and Antistrophe, and was therefore most probably, as I have before observed, set to music and sung; but as it makes at the same time part of their conversation

166 PHILOCTETES.

Without a fellow-suff'rer, left alone,
 Depriv'd of all the mutual joys that flow
 From sweet society, distemper'd too;
 How can he bear it? O! unhappy race
 Of mortal man! doom'd to an endless round
 Of sorrows, and immeasurable woe!
 Second to none in fair nobility
 Was Philoctetes, of illustrious race;
 Yet here he lyes, from ev'ry human aid
 Far off remov'd, in dreadful solitude,
 And mingles with the wild and savage herd;
 With them in famine and in misery
 Consumes his days, and weeps their common fate,
 Unheeded, save when babbling echo mourns
 In bitt'rest notes responsive to his woe.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And yet I wonder not; for if aright
 I judge, from angry heav'n the sentence came;
 And Chrysa was the cruel source of all;

Nor

versation with Neoptolemus, I could not throw it into ode or rhyme without interrupting the narration, and giving a motely appearance to the dialogue; I have therefore left it in blank verse. The description of Philoctetes's distress, in this passage, is in the Greek inimitably beautiful, which I have endeavoured to give my readers some imperfect idea of in the translation.

From angry heaven, &c. The story of Philoctetes, as related in the fifteenth book of Telemachus, differs from that of Sophocles in this particular; Philoctetes there informs Telemachus, that he drop'd by chance one of the arrows of Hercules on his own foot, and that the wound remained for a long time incurable. He likewise attributes this misfortune, and all the distress which he suffered at Lemnos, to his crime in discovering to Ulysses the place where Hercules died, and which he had solemnly sworn to conceal. The gods therefore punished him for his perjury.

PHILOCTETES. 167

Nor doth this sad disease inflict him still
Incurable, without assenting gods;
For so they have decreed, lest Troy shou'd fall
Beneath his arrows e'er th' appointed time
Of it's destruction come.

CHORUS.

No more, my son;

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What sayst thou?

CHORUS.

Sure I heard a dismal groan
Of some afflicted wretch.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Which way?

CHORUS.

Ev'n now

I hear it, and the sound as of some step
Slow-moving this way, he is not far from us;
His plaints are louder now; prepare, my son.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

For what;

CHORUS.

New troubles; for behold he comes;
Not like the shepherd with his rural pipe
And chearful song, but groaning heavily;
Either his wounded foot against some thorn
Hath struck, and pains him sorely, or perchance
He hath espied from far some ship attempting
To enter this inhospitable port,
And hence his cries to save it from destruction.

[Exeunt.

M 4

ACT

Not like the Shepherd, &c. Otway has caught this image in his
Orphan.

" Sweet as the shepherd's pipe upon the mountain."

168 PHILOCTETES.

A C T II.

S C E N E I.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

SAY, welcome strangers, what disastrous fate
 Led you to this inhospitable shore,
 Nor haven safe, nor habitation fit
 Affording ever? of what clime, what race?
 Who are ye? speak; if I may trust that garb
 Familiar once to me, ye are of Greece,
 My much-lov'd country; let me hear the sound
 Of your long-wish'd for voices; do not look
 With horror on me, but in kind compassion
 Pity a wretch deserted and forlorn
 In this sad place; O! if ye come as friends,
 Speak then, and answer, hold some converse with me,
 For this at least from man to man is due.

NEOP.

Say, welcome strangers, &c. The absurdity of dividing the Greek tragedies into five acts, which is perpetually recurring to us, appears remarkably evident in this place. Brumoy was obliged to make this the beginning of the second act, though it is apparent the stage is not empty. Philoctetes enters to Neoptolemus and the Chorus whilst they are talking of him. There was, however, no other method of dividing the play, without making the first act three times as long as any of the rest; I have therefore follow'd this division merely for a pause to the English reader.

Do not look, &c. Philoctetes, we may naturally imagine, after ten years stay on an uninhabited island, made but an uncouth and savage appearance; this address to the chorus therefore, who are shock'd at his figure, is extremely natural, as is indeed almost every thing which Sophocles puts into the mouths of every character in the drama.

PHILOCTETES. 169

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Know, stranger, first what most thou seem'st to wish;
We are of Greece.

PHILOCTETES.

O! happiness to hear!

After so many years of dreadful silence,
How welcome was that sound! O! tell me, son,
What chance, what purpose, who conducted thee?
What brought thee hither, what propitious gale?
Who art thou? tell me all; inform me quickly.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Native of Scyros, thither I return;
My name is Neoptolemus, the son
Of brave Achilles. I have told thee all.

PHILOCTETES.

Dear is thy country, and thy father dear
To me, thou darling of old Lycomede;
But tell me in what fleet, and whence thou cam'st.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

From Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

'From Troy? I think thou wert not with us
When first our fleet sail'd forth.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wert thou then there?
Or know'st thou aught of that great enterprize?

PHI.

Native of Scyros, &c. Scyros was an island in the Ægean sea, of which Lycomedes was king; hither Achilles was brought in woman's apparel to avoid the Trojan war, and falling in love with Deidamia, the king's daughter, had by her Pyrrhus, otherwise called Neoptolemus. This explains what follows, where Philoctetes calls him "the darling of old Lycomede."

170 PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not then the man whom you behold?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How shou'd I know whom I had never seen?

PHILOCTETES.

Have you ne'er heard of me, nor of my name?

Hath my sad story never reach'd your ear?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Never.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! how hateful to the gods,

How very poor a wretch must I be then,

That Greece shou'd never hear of woes like mine!

But they who sent me hither, they conceal'd them,

And smile triumphant, whilst my cruel wounds

Grow deeper still. O! sprung from great Achilles,

Behold before thee Pæan's wretched son,

With whom, a chance but thou hast heard, remain

The dreadful arrows of renown'd Alcides,

Ev'n the unhappy Philoctetes, him

Whom the Atridæ and the vile Ulysses

Inhuman left, distemper'd as I was

By the envenom'd serpent's deep-felt wound;

Soon as they saw that, with long toil oppress'd,

Sleep had o'erta'en me on the hollow rock,

There did they leave me when from Chrysa's shore

They bent their fatal course; a little food

And these few rags were all they wou'd bestow;

Such one day be their fate! Alas! my son,

How dreadful, think'st thou, was that waking to me,

When from my sleep I rose and saw them not!

How

How did I weep ! and mourn my wretched state !
 When not a ship remain'd of all the fleet
 That brought me here ; no kind companion left
 To minister or needful food or balm
 To my sad wounds : on ev'ry side I look'd,
 And nothing saw but woe ; of that indeed
 Measure too full : for day succeeded day,
 And still no comfort came ; myself alone
 Cou'd to myself the means of life afford,
 In this poor grotto ; on my bow I liv'd :
 The winged dove, which my sharp arrow slew,

With

How did I weep, &c. The character of Melifander in the Agamemnon of Thompson, is a close imitation of Philoctetes. Our excellent descriptive poet has there transfused the spirit of Sophocles, and painted the miseries of solitude in the warmest colours. Thompson even improves on the passage before us in the following lines, which are so beautiful that I cannot help transcribing them.

Cast on the wildest of the Cyclad isles,
 Where never human foot had mark'd the shore,
 These ruffians left me-----yet, believe me, Arcas,
 Such is the rooted love we bear mankind,
 All ruffians as they were, I never heard
 A sound so dismal as their parting oars.

See Thomp. Agam. act 3.

The sentiment in the two last lines is remarkably natural and pathetic ; but I refer my readers to the play itself, which abounds in many fine imitations of the antient tragedy.

The winged dove, &c.

Herbs were my food, those blessed stores of health ;
 Only, when winter from my daily search
 Withdrew my verdant meal, I was oblig'd
 In faithless snares to seize, which truly griev'd me,
 My sylvan friends, that ne'er till then had known,
 And therefore dreaded less the tyrant man.

See Thompson's Agamemnon.

172 PHILOCTETES.

With pain I brought into my little hut,
 And feasted there; then from the broken ice
 I slak'd my thirst, or crept into the wood
 For useful fuel; from the stricken flint
 I drew the latent spark, that warms me still;
 And still revives, this with my humble roof
 Preserve me, son; but O! my wounds remain!
 Thou see'st an island desolate and waste;
 No friendly port, nor hopes of gain to tempt,
 Nor host to welcome in the traveller;
 Few seek the wild inhospitable shore.
 By adverse winds, sometimes th' unwilling guests,
 As well thou may'st suppose, were hither driv'n;
 But when they came, they only pity'd me,
 Gave me a little food, or better garb
 To shield me from the cold; in vain I pray'd
 That they wou'd bear me to my native soil,
 For none wou'd listen: here for ten long years
 Have I remain'd, whilst misery and famine
 Keep fresh my wounds, and double my misfortune.
 This have th' Atridæ and Ulysses done,
 And may the gods with equal woes repay them!

CHORUS.

O! son of Pæan, well might those, who came
 And saw thee thus, in kind compassion weep;
 I too must pity thee; I can no more.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I can bear witness to thee, for I know
 By sad experience what th' Atridæ are,
 And what Ulysses.

PHILOCTETES.

Hast thou suffer'd then?
 And dost thou hate them too?

NEOP-

PHILOCTETES. 173

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! that these hands

Cou'd vindicate my wrongs! Mycenæ then
And Sparta shou'd confess that Scyros boasts
Of sons as brave and valiant as their own.

PHILOCTETES.

O! noble youth! but wherefore cam'st thou hither?
Whence this resentment?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will tell thee all,

If I can bear to tell it: know then, soon
As great Achilles dy'd-----

PHILOCTETES.

-----O! stay, my son,

Is then Achilles dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is, and not

By mortal hand, but by Apollo's shaft
Fell glorious.

PHILOCTETES.

O! most worthy of each other,

The slayer and the slain! permit me, son,
To mourn his fate, e'er I attend to thine.

[he weeps.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! thou need'st not weep for other's woes,
Thou hast enough already of thy own.

PHI-

Mycenæ then, and Sparta, &c. Two cities of Peloponnesus.
Neoptolemus here threatens Agamemnon and Menelaus, the former
of whom was king of Mycenæ, and the latter of Sparta.

By Apollo's shaft. Homer, and after him Virgil, makes Phœbus
assist Paris in the death of Achilles, by wounding him with an ar-
row in the heel, the only part of him that was vulnerable.

174 PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis very true; and therefore to thy tale.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thus then it was. Soon as Achilles dy'd,
 Phoenix, the guardian of his tender years,
 Instant sail'd forth, und fought me out at Scyros;
 With him the wary chief Ulysses came;
 They told me then (or true or false I know not)
 My father dead, by me, and me alone
 Proud Troy must fall; I yielded to their pray'rs;
 I hop'd to see at least the dear remains
 Of him, whom living I had long in vain
 Wish'd to behold; safe at Sigeum's port
 Soon we arrived; in crouds the num'rous host
 Throng'd to embrace me, call'd the gods to witness
 In me once more they saw their lov'd Achilles
 To life restor'd; but he alas! was gone.
 I shed the duteous tear, then fought my friends
 Th' Atridæ, (friends I thought 'em) claim'd the arms
 Of my dead father, and what else remain'd
 His late possession, when, O! cruel words!
 And wretched I to hear them! thus they answer'd;
 " Son of Achilles, thou in vain demand'st
 " Those arms already to Ulysses giv'n;
 " The rest be thine;" I wept; and is it thus,
 Indignant I reply'd, ye dare to give
 My right away? Know, boy, Ulysses cry'd,
 That right was mine, and therefore they bestow'd
 The boon on me, me who preserv'd the arms
 And him who bore them too. With anger fir'd

At

Phoenix, &c. See Homer, book 9.

And him who bore them. Ulysses was reported to have taken away
 the

At this proud speech, I threaten'd all that rage
 Cou'd dictate to me, if he not return'd them.
 Stung with my words, yet calm, he answer'd me;
 Thou wert not with us; thou wert in a place,
 Where thou shou'dst not have been; and since thou mean'st
 To brave us thus, know, thou shalt never bear
 Those arms with thee to Scyros; 'tis resolv'd.
 Thus injur'd, thus depriv'd of all I held
 Most precious, by the worst of men, I left
 The hateful place, and seek my native soil;
 Nor do I blame so much the proud Ulysses
 As his base masters: army, city, all
 Depend on those who rule: when men grow vile
 The guilt is theirs who taught them to be wicked.
 I've told thee all, and him who hates th' Atridae
 I hold a friend to me, and to the gods.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

O earth; thou mother of great Jove,
 Embracing all with universal love,

Author

the dead body of Achilles from the Trojans, and carried it off the field of battle to the Grecian camp. Ovid mentions this in his account of the contest,

His humeris, his inquam humeris, ego corpus Achillis

Et simul arma tuli.

Meta. book 15.

O! earth, &c. This is an occasional song of the chorus, which is very short, consisting only of a strophe of thirteen lines in the original, we shall find the antistrophe at a considerable distance from it, breaking the dialogue in a manner very uncommon.

Embracing all, &c. The earth, under the various names of Cybele, Ops, Rhea and Vesta, called the mother of the gods, was worship'd in Phrygia and Lybia, where the river Pactolus is said to have enrich'd Cræsus with its sands. Cybele is represented by the poets as drawn by lions.

176 PHILOCTETES.

Author benign of ev'ry good,
Thro' whom Pætolus rolls his golden flood,
To thee, whom in thy rapid car
Fierce lions draw, I rose and made my pray'r,
To thee I made my sorrows known,
When from Achilles' injur'd son
Th' Atridæ gave the prize, that fatal day
When proud Ulysses bore his arms away.

PHILOCTETES.

I wonder not, my friend, to see you here,
And I believe the tale; for well I know
The men who wrong'd you, know the base Ulysses;
Falsehood and fraud dwell on his lips, and nought
That's just or good can be expected from him;
But strange it is to me, that, Ajax present,
He dare attempt it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ajax is no more;
Had he been living, I had ne'er been spoil'd
Thus of my right.

PHILOCTETES.

Is he then dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! the son of Tydeus, and that slave,
Sold by his father Sisyphus, they live,
Unworthy as they are.

NEOP-

Son of Tydeus. Diomedes.

Sold by his father, &c. It was reported that Anticlea was taken away by Laertes after her marriage with Sisyphus, and when she was with child of Ulysses, for which Sisyphus the first husband re-

PHILOCTETES. 177

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! they do,

And flourish still.

PHILOCTETES.

My old and worthy friend

The Pylian sage, how is he? he cou'd see

Their arts, and wou'd have giv'n them better counsels.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Weigh'd down with grief he lives, but, most unhappy,

Weeps his lost son, his dear Antilochus.

PHILOCTETES.

O! double woe! whom I cou'd most have wish'd

To live and to be happy, those to perish!

Ulysses to survive! it shou'd not be.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! 'tis a subtle foe; but deepest plans

May sometimes fail.

N PHIL

ceived a sum of money; Ulysses therefore was often reproach'd with being the son of Sisyphus.

See a note on Ajax, p. 12.

The Pylian sage. Nestor, king of Pylos. Agamemnon had such an opinion of his wisdom, that Homer makes him say, if he had ten such counsellors Troy would soon fall before him.

Weeps his lost son. Antilochus was slain by Memnon in the Trojan war.

See Homer's Od. b. 4.

O! 'tis a subtle foe. The original is

Σοφός παλαιὸς κείνος. ἀλλὰ καὶ σοφαί

Γνώμαι, φιλοκτενέ, ἐμποδίζονται Σάλα.

which Brumoy translates thus, 'Antiloque étoit brave, mais la valeur est souvent mal récompensée, 'Antilochus was brave, but 'valour is often ill-rewarded.' The sense of this passage, says he, is doubtful, but it certainly alludes to Antilochus. With all due deference to Mr. Brumoy's judgment, I cannot help thinking that he is here mistaken. Philoctetes had just observed that Ulysses still lived; and Neoptolemus immediately answers, 'O! he is a subtle foe,' Σοφός

ΠΑΛΑΙΟΣ,

178 PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

Where was Patroclus then,
Thy father's dearest friend?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He too was dead.

In war, alas! so fate ordains it ever,
The coward 'scapes, the brave and virtuous fall.

PHILOCTETES.

It is too true; and now thou talk'st of cowards,
Where is that worthless wretch, of readiest tongue,
Subtle and voluble?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ulysses?

PHILOCTETES.

No;

Thersites; ever talking, never heard.

NEOPTOLEMUS,

I have not seen him, but I hear he lives.

PHILOCTETES.

I did not doubt it: evil never dyes;

The gods take care of that: if aught there be
Fraudful and vile, 'tis safe; the good and just
Perish unpity'd by them; wherefore is it?

When gods do ill, why shou'd we worship them?

NEOP-

παλαιστής, 'a cunning wrestler.' Sophocles must certainly mean Ulysses, for how can Σορος (according to Brumoy's translation) signify brave, or Σορας γυνώμας be interpreted valour? Thompson had apparently this very passage in his eye, when he makes Melifander say,

"Malice often over-shoots, itself."

Thersites. For the character of Thersites, see Homer's Iliad, b. 2.

PHILOCTETES. 179

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Since thus it is, since virtue is oppress'd,
And vice triumphant, who deserve to live
Are doom'd to perish, and the guilty reign;
Henceforth, O! son of Pæan, far from Troy
And the Atridæ will I live remote.
I wou'd not see the man I cannot love.
My barren Scyros shall afford me refuge,
And home-felt joys delight my future days.
So, fare thee well, and may th' indulgent gods
Heal thy sad wound, and grant thee ev'ry wish
Thy soul can form! once more, farewell. I go,
The first propitious gale.

PHILOCTETES.

What! now, my son?
So soon?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Immediately; the time demands
We shou'd be near, and ready to depart.

PHILOCTETES.

Now, by the mem'ry of thy honour'd fire,
By thy lov'd mother, by whate'er remains
On earth most dear to thee, O! hear me now,
Thy suppliant; do not, do not thus forsake me,
Alone, oppress'd, deserted, as thou see'st,
In this sad place; I shall, I know I must be
A burthen to thee, but, O! bear it kindly,
For ever doth the noble mind abhor
Th' ungen'rous deed, and loves humanity;

N 2

Disgrace

Since thus it is, &c. Addison had probably this passage in view,
when he makes his Cato say,

“When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
“The post of honour is a private station.”

Disgrace attends thee if thou dost forsake me,
 If not, immortal fame rewards thy goodness.
 Thou mayst convey me safe to OEta's shores
 In one short day; I'll trouble you no longer;
 Hide me in any part where I may least
 Molest you. Hear me; by the guardian god
 Of the poor suppliant, all-protecting Jove,
 I beg, behold me at thy feet, infirm,
 And wretched as I am, I clasp thy knees;
 Leave me not here then, where there is no mark
 Of human footstep; take me to thy home,
 Or to Eubœa's port, to OEta, thence
 Short is the way to Trachin, or the banks
 Of Sperchius' gentle stream, to meet my father,
 If yet he lives; for, oh! I beg'd him oft
 By those who hither came, to fetch me hence.
 Or he is dead, or they neglectful bent
 Their hasty course to their own native soil.
 Be thou my better guide; pity and save
 The poor and wretched. Think, my son, how frail
 And full of danger is the state of man,
 Now prosp'rous, now adverse; who feels no ills
 Shou'd therefore fear them; and when fortune smiles

Be

Hide me in any place. The original says, "throw me into the
 " sink, foredeck, or stern;" there was no necessity of specifying
 these in the translation.

To Eubœa's port, &c. Eubœa was a large island in the Ægean
 sea, now called Negropont. OEta, a mountain in Theffaly, now
 called Bunina.

When fortune smiles, &c. This is almost literally translated, and
 the exact sense of the original. Brumoy has added, "c'est alors
 " qu'il est beau de secourir les malheureux," "this is the time
 " when

Be doubly cautious, lest destruction come
Remorseless on him, and he fall unpitied.

CHORUS.

O! pity him, my lord, for bitt'rest woes
And trials most severe he hath recounted;
Far be such sad distress from those I love!
O! if thou hat'st the base Atreidæ, now
Revenge thee on them, serve their deadliest foe;
Bear the poor suppliant to his native soil;
So shalt thou bless thy friend, and 'scape the wrath
Of the just gods, who still protect the wretched.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Your proffer'd kindness, friends, may cost you dear;
When you shall feel his dreadful malady
Oppress you sore, you will repent it.

CHORUS.

Never

Shall that reproach be ours.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

In gen'rous pity

Of the afflicted thus to be o'ercome
Were most disgraceful to me; he shall go.
May the kind gods speed our departure hence,
And guide our vessels to the wish'd-for shore!

N^o 3

PHI-

"when it most becomes us to succour the unhappy;" a sentiment not improper in the mouth of Philoctetes, but which is not in Sophocles.

O! pity him, &c. This, in the original, is the antistrophe to the little song of the chorus, which I took notice of p. 175. The reason why I have not put it into the same measure as the other is sufficiently obvious.

The wish'd-for shore. In the original, 'the place which we wish to sail to.' The expression, we see, is purposely ambiguous;
Neop.

132: PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

O! happy hour! O! kindest, best of men!
 And you my dearest friends! how shall I thank you?
 What shall I do to shew my grateful heart?
 Let us be gone, but O! permit me first
 To take a last farewell of my poor hut,
 Where I so long have liv'd; perhaps you'll say
 I must have had a noble mind to bear it;
 The very sight to any eyes but mine
 Were horrible, but sad necessity
 At length prevail'd, and made it pleasing to me.

CHORUS.

One from our ship, my lord, and with him comes
 A stranger; stop a moment till we hear
 Their bus'ness with us.

Enter a SPY in the habit of a merchant, with
 another Grecian.

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES,
 CHORUS, SPY.

SPY.

Son of great Achilles,

Know,

Neoptolemus means Troy, and Philoctetes understands it as spoken
 of Scyros, his native country.

My poor hut. The Greek is *αοικον εριστοιχιστον*, 'my uninhabitable habitation;' this would not bear a literal translation.

Son of great Achilles, &c. This spy is probably the same person who made his appearance in the first scene, and was sent out to watch for Philoctetes. Ulysses sends him back in the disguise of a merchant, to carry on the plot, and hasten as much as possible the departure

PHILOCTETES. 183

Know, chance alone hath brought me hither, driv'n
By adverse winds to where thy vessels lay,
As home I sail'd from Troy; there did I meet
This my companion, who inform'd me where
Thou might'st be found: hence to pursue my course
And not to tell thee what concerns thee near
Had been ungen'rous, thou perhaps mean time
Of Greece and of her counsels nought suspecting,
Counsels against thee not by threats alone
Or words enforc'd, but now in execution.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by my virtue, stranger, for thy news
I am much bound to thee, and will repay
Thy service; tell me what the Greeks have done.

S P Y.

A fleet already sails to fetch thee back,
Conducted by old Phoenix, and the sons
Of valiant Theseus.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Come they then to force me?
Or am I to be won by their persuasion?

S P Y.

I know not that; you have what I cou'd learn.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And did th' Atridæ send them?

N 4

S P Y.

departure of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. Ulysses had already desired Neoptolemus to frame his answers according to the hints given him by the spy, and to act in concert with him; Neoptolemus, therefore, purposely turns the discourse to Ulysses, to give the spy an opportunity of mentioning his design on Philoctetes. He blends truth and falsehood, we see, together as artfully as possible, which prevents the least suspicion of fraud or treachery.

The sons of Theseus. Acamas and Demophoon.

184 PHILOCTETES.

S P Y.

Sent they are,

And will be with you soon.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But wherefore then

Came not Ulysses? did his courage fail?

S P Y.

He, e'er I left the camp, with Diomede

On some important embassy sail'd forth

In search-----

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Of whom?

S P Y.

There was a man---but stay,

Who is thy friend here, tell me, but speak softly.

[whispering him.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

The famous Philoctetes.

S P Y.

Ha! begone then,

Ask me no more; away, immediately.

PHILOCTETES.

What do these dark mysterious whispers mean?

Concern they me, my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know not what

He means to say, but I wou'd have him speak

Boldly before us all, whate'er it be.

S P Y.

Do not betray me to the Grecian host,

Nor make me speak what I wou'd fain conceal;

I am but poor; they have befriended me,

NEOP-

PHILOCTETES. 185

NEOPTOLEMUS.

In me thou seest an enemy confest
To the Atridæ; this is my best friend
Because he hates them too; if thou art mine,
Hide nothing then.

S P Y.

Consider first.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have.

S P Y.

The blame will be on you.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why, let it be;

But speak, I charge thee.

S P Y.

Since I must then, know,

In solemn league combin'd, the bold Ulysses,
And gallant Diomed have sworn, by force
Or by persuasion to bring back thy friend:
The Grecians heard Laertes' son declare
His purpose, far more resolute he seem'd
Than Diomed, and surer of success.

NEOPTOLEMUS,

But why th' Atridæ, after so long time,
Again shou'd wish to see this wretched exile,
Whence this desire? came it from th' angry gods
To punish thus their inhumanity?

S P Y.

I can inform you; for perhaps from Greece
Of late you have not heard: there was a prophet,
Son of old Priam, Helenus by name,
Him in his midnight walks, the wily chief
Ulysses, curse of ev'ry tongue, espy'd;

Took

186 PHILOCTETES.

Took him, and led him captive, to the Greeks
 A welcome spoil; much he foretold to all,
 And added last, that Troy shou'd never fall
 Till Philoctetes from this isle return'd;
 Ulysses heard, and instant promise gave
 To fetch him hence; he hoped by gentle means
 To gain him; those successless, force at last
 Cou'd but compel him; he wou'd go, he cry'd,
 And if he fail'd, his head shou'd pay the forfeit.
 I've told thee all, and warn thee to be gone,
 Thou and thy friend, if thou wou'dst wish to save him.

PHILOCTETES.

And does the traytor think he can persuade me?
 As well might he persuade me to return
 From death to life, as his base father did.

S P Y.

Of that I know not: I must to my ship;
 Farewel, and may the gods protect you both!

Exit.

PHILOCTETES.

Lead me, expose me to the Grecian host!
 And cou'd the insolent Ulysses hope
 With his soft flatteries e'er to conquer me?

No,

His father. Sisyphus; imagined by many to be the father of Ulysses: concerning whom, a superstitious report prevailed, that having on his death-bed desired his wife not to bury him, on his arrival in the infernal regions, he complained to Pluto of her cruelty, in not performing the funeral obsequies, and was by him permitted, on promise of immediate return, to revisit this world, in order to punish her for the neglect; but when he came to earth, being unwilling to go back to Tartarus, he was compelled by Mercury. It is necessary to the understanding of Sophocles, that the English reader should be familiar with, and reconciled to all these absurdities contained in the mythology and religion of the Greeks.

PHILOCTETES. 187

No; sooner wou'd I listen to the voice
Of that fell serpent, whose envenom'd tongue
Hath lamed me thus; but what is there he dare not
Or say or do? I know he will be here
Ev'n now, depend on't; therefore, let's away;
Quick let the sea divide us from Ulysses;
Let us be gone; for well-timed expedition,
The task perform'd, brings safety and repose.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Soon as the wind permits us, we embark,
But now 'tis adverse.

PHILOCTETES.

Ev'ry wind is fair,
When we are flying from misfortune.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

True;
And 'tis against them too.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! no storms
Can drive back fraud and rapine from their prey.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I'm ready; take what may be necessary,
And follow me.

PHILOCTETES.

I want not much.
NEOPTOLEMUS.

Perhaps
My ship will furnish you.

PHILOCTETES.

There is a plant
Which to my wound gives some relief; I must
Have that,

NEOP-

188 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is there aught else?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my bow,

I had forgot; I must not lose that treasure.

[Philoctetes steps towards his grotto, and brings
out his bow and arrows.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Are these the famous arrows then?

PHILOCTETES.

They are.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And may I be permitted to behold,

To touch, to pay my adoration to them?

PHILOCTETES.

In these, my son, in ev'ry thing that's mine

Thou hast a right.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But if it be a crime,

I wou'd not; otherwise-----

PHILOCTETES.

O! thou art full

Of piety; in thee it is no crime;

In thee, my friend, by whom alone I look

Once more with pleasure on the radiant sun;

By whom I live; who giv'st me to return

To my dear father, to my friends, my country.

Sunk as I was beneath my foes, once more

I rise to triumph o'er them by thy aid;

Behold them, touch them, but return them to me,

And boast that virtue which on thee alone

Bestow'd such honour; virtue made them mine;

I can deny thee nothing: he, whose heart

PHILOCTETES. 189

Is grateful, can alone deserve the name
Of friend, to ev'ry treasure far superior.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Go in.

PHILOCTETES.

Come with me; for my painful wound
Requires thy friendly hand to help me onward.

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Since proud Ixion, doom'd to feel
The tortures of th' eternal wheel,
Bound by the hand of angry Jove,
Receiv'd the due rewards of impious love;
Ne'er was distress so deep or woe so great
As on the wretched Philoctetes wait;
Who ever with the just and good
Guileless of fraud and rapine stood,
And the fair paths of virtue still pursu'd;
Alone on this inhospitable shore,
Where waves for ever beat, and tempests roar;
How cou'd he e'er or hope or comfort know,
Or painful life support beneath such weight of woe!

ANTI-

Since proud Ixion, &c. The story of Ixion, here alluded to, is generally known; to the few who are unacquainted with it, it may be sufficient to observe, that Ixion was in love with Juno; and for boasting of that success in his amour, which he never met with, was thrown by Jupiter into hell, where, being placed on a wheel encompassed with serpents, he was turned round without ceasing.

This song of the chorus, agreeably to the precepts of Horace, arises immediately from the subject, being a pathetic lamentation over Philoctetes; whose distresses are painted in the warmest colours, and described in all the elegance of ancient simplicity.

ANTISTROPHE.

Expos'd to the inclement skies,
 Deserted and forlorn he lyes,
 No friend or fellow-mourner there,
 To sooth his sorrows, and divide his care;
 Or seek the healing plant of pow'r to swage
 His aching wound, and mitigate it's rage;
 But if perchance, a-while releas'd
 From tort'ring pain, he sinks to rest,
 Awaken'd soon, and by sharp hunger prest,
 Compell'd to wander forth in search of food,
 He crawls in anguish to the neighb'ring wood;
 Ev'n as the tott'ring infant in despair,
 Who mourns an absent mother's kind supporting care.

STROPHE II.

The teeming earth, who mortals still supplies
 With ev'ry good, to him her seed denies;
 A stranger to the joy that flows
 From the kind aid which man on man bestows;
 Nor food alas! to him was giv'n,
 Save when his arrows pierc'd the birds of heav'n;
 Nor e'er did Bacchus' heart-expanding bowl,
 For ten long years relieve his chearless soul;
 But glad was he his eager thirst to slake
 In the unwholsome pool, or ever-stagnant lake.

ANTISTROPHE II.

But now, behold the joyful captive freed;
 A fairer fate, and brighter days succeed:
 For he at last hath found a friend
 Of noblest race, to save and to defend,

To

Hath found a friend, &c. Brumoy observes on this passage, that the chorus, being strongly attached to the interest of their master Neoptolemus, are but the echos of his expressions, and though they could

PHILOCTETES. 191

To guide him with protecting hand,
And safe restore him to his native land ;
On Sperchius' flow'ry banks to join the throng
Of Melian nymphs, and lead the choral song
On OEta's top, which saw Alcides rise,
And from the flaming pile ascend his native skies.

A C T III.

S C E N E I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

COME, Philoctetes ; why thus silent ? wherefore
This sudden terror on thee ?

PHILOCTETES.

Oh !

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Whence is it ?

PHILOCTETES.

Nothing ; my son, go on.

NEOP.

could not therefore be ignorant of his design to carry Philoctetes to Troy instead of his native country, they here mention the latter as his real intention, which they must be supposed to do from the fear of being over-heard by Philoctetes, whose cave was close to them,

On Sperchius' banks. Sperchius was a river in Thessaly.

Melian nymphs. Melos was an island near Candy, reckoned among the Cyclades, and now called Milo.

Nothing, my son. The pains which Philoctetes felt from his wound are described as periodical, returning at certain seasons, and attended with violent agonies and convulsions, which generally terminated

192 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is it thy wound

That pains thee thus?

PHILOCTETES.

No; I am better now,

Oh! gods!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why dost thou call thus on the gods?

PHILOCTETES.

To smile propitious, and preserve us----Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art in mis'ry. Tell me; wilt thou not?

What is it?

PHILOCTETES.

O! my son, I can no longer

Conceal it from thee. O! I dye, I perish!

By the great gods let me implore thee, now

This moment, if thou hast a sword, O! strike,

Cut off this painful limb, and end my being.

NEOP-

terminated in a profuse discharge of matter; the pain then ceasing, the fatigue occasioned by it brought on a gentle slumber which relieved him. Philoctetes, feeling the symptoms of his distemper approaching, endeavours as much as possible to conceal his anguish, being apprehensive that his cries and groans might induce Neoptolemus, in spite of his promise, to leave him behind; he makes slight of it therefore, till quite over-powered by continual torture, he acknowledges himself at last unable to stir. This circumstance, we may observe, is artfully thrown in by the poet, to stop the effect of Ulysses's stratagem, which was just on the point of execution, and which, if it succeeded, must of course have put an end to the drama; this accident intervening gives a new turn to the whole, serves to introduce the remorse and repentance of Neoptolemus, gives Ulysses an opportunity of appearing, and brings about the catastrophe.

PHILOCTETES. 193

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What can this mean, that unexpected thus
It shou'd torment thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not, my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What is the cause?

PHILOCTETES.

Can you not guess it?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No.

PHILOCTETES.

Nor I.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

That's stranger still.

PHILOCTETES.

My son, my son!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

This new attack is terrible indeed!

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis inexpressible! have pity on me!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What shall I do?

PHILOCTETES.

Do not be terrify'd,

And leave me: it's returns are regular,

And like the traveller, when it's appetite

Is satisfy'd, it will depart. Oh! oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art oppress'd with ills on ev'ry side.

Give me thy hand; come, wilt thou lean upon me?

PHILOCTETES.

No; but these arrows, take, preserve 'em for me

O

A

194 PHILOCTETES.

A little while, till I grow better : sleep
Is coming on me, and my pains will cease.
Let me be quiet ; if mean time, our foes
Surprize thee, let nor force nor artifice
Deprive thee of the great, the precious trust
I have repos'd in thee ; that were ruin
To thee, and to thy friend.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be not afraid,
No hands but mine shall touch them ; give them to me.

PHILOCTETES.

Receive them, son ; and let it be thy pray'r
They bring not woes on thee, as they have done
To me, and to Alcides.

[Gives him the bow and arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

May the gods
Forbid it ever ; may they guide our course.
And speed our prosp'rous sails !

PHILOCTETES.

Alas ! my son,
I fear thy vows are vain ; behold my blood
Flows from the wound ; O ! how it pains me ! now,
It comes, it hastens ; do not, do not leave me ;
O ! that Ulysses felt this racking torture,
Ev'n to his inmost soul ! again it comes,
O ! Agamemnon, Menelaus, why
Shou'd not you bear these pangs as I have done ?
O ! death, where art thou, death ? so often call'd,
Wilt thou not listen ? wilt thou never come ?
Take thou the Lemnian fire, my gen'rous friend,

Do

The Lemnian fire. Alluding, most probably, to the generally received opinion, that the forges of Vulcan were in the island of Lemnos.

Do me the same kind office which I did
For my Alcides ; these are thy reward ;
He gave them to me, thou alone deserv'st
The great inheritance. What says my friend ?
What says my dear preserver ? O ! where art thou ?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I mourn thy hapless fate.

PHILOCTETES.

Be of good cheer,

Quick my disorder comes, and goes as soon ;
I only beg thee not to leave me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't, I will stay.

PHILOCTETES.

Wilt thou indeed ?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Trust me, I will:

PHILOCTETES.

I need not bind thee to it

By oath.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O ! no ; 'twere impious to forsake thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Give me thy hand, and pledge thy faith.

O 2

NEOP-

The same kind office. Philoctetes had attended his friend Hercules in his last moments, and set fire to the funeral pile, when he expired on the top of mount Oeta.

Give me thy hand. Amongst the Greeks, in all compacts and agreements, it was usual to take each other by the right hand, that being the manner of plighting faith ; this was always considered by men of character as equally binding with the most solemn oath ; Philoctetes therefore desires no other assurance of the sincerity of his friend.

196 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I do.

PHILOCTETES.

Thither, O! thither lead.

[pointing up to heaven.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What sayst thou? where?

PHILOCTETES.

Above.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What, lost again? why look'st thou thus

On that bright circle?

PHILOCTETES.

Let me, let me go.

[lays hold of him.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Where wouldst thou go?

PHILOCTETES.

Loose me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will not.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh!

You'll kill me, if you do not.

[lets him go.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

There, then; now

Is thy mind better?

PHI-

friend. It is perhaps needless here to remark, that this custom has been adopted by the moderns, and is practised in almost every nation to this day, though it does not amongst us carry so much weight with it, being seldom made use of in matters of great importance.

PHILOCTETES. 197

PHILOCTETES.

O! receive me, earth;

Receive a dying man; here must I lye;

For O! my pain's so great I cannot rise.

[Philoctetes sinks down on the earth near the entrance
of the cave.]

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Sleep hath o'erta'en him, see his head is lain
On the cold earth; the balmy sweat thick drops
From ev'ry limb, and from the broken vein
Flows the warm blood; let us indulge his slumbers.

CHORUS.

(INVOCATION TO SLEEP.)

Sleep, thou patron of mankind,
Great physician of the mind,
Who dost nor pain nor sorrow know,
Sweetest balm of ev'ry woe,
Mildest sov'reign, hear us now;
Hear thy wretched suppliant's vow;
His eyes in gentle slumbers close,
And continue his repose;

O 3

Hear

Sleep, thou patron, &c. Philoctetes, quite faint from excess of pain, lays himself down on the earth, and sinks into a short slumber; the chorus, with great propriety, fill up the pause of action by an invocation to sleep. In the original, this speech of the chorus, and the next, are in strophe, antistrophe, and epode; the reason why I have thrown only the first part into rhyme must be obvious to the judicious reader.

198 PHILOCTETES.

Hear thy wretched suppliant's vow,
Great phyfician, hear us now.

And now, my fon, what beft may fuit thy purpofe
Confider well, and how we are to aét;
What more can we expect? the time is come;
For better far is opportunity
Seiz'd at the lucky hour than all the counfels
Which wifdom dictates or which craft infpires.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He hears us not; but eafy as it is
To gain the prize, it wou'd avail us nothing
Were he not with us; Phœbus hath reserv'd
For him alone the crown of victory;
But thus to boaft of what we cou'd not do,
And break our word, were moft difgraceful to us.

CHORUS.

The gods will guide us, fear it not, my fon;
But what thou fay'ft, fpeak foft, for well thou know'ft
The fick man's fleep is fhort; he may awake
And hear us, therefore let us hide our purpofe;
If then thou think'ft as he does, thou know'ft whom,
This is the hour; at fuch a time, my fon,
The wifeft err; but mark me, the wind's fair,
And Philoctetes fleeps, void of all help;
Lame, impotent, unable to refift,
He is as one among the dead; ev'n now
We'll take him with us; 'twere an eafy task.
Leave it to me, my fon; there is no danger.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No more; his eyes are open; fee, he moves.

SCENE

Thou know'ft whom. The chorus means Ulyffes, but is afraid to mention his name, left Philoctetes fhould awake and hear it, which would at once difcover the plot againft him.

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES. [Awaking.

O ! fair returning light ! beyond my hope ;
 You too my kind preservers ! O ! my son,
 I cou'd not think thou wou'dst have stay'd so long
 In kind compassion to thy friend ; alas !
 Th' Atridæ never wou'd have acted thus ;
 But noble is thy nature, and thy birth,
 And therefore little did my wretchedness,
 Nor from my wounds the noisome stench deter
 Thy gen'rous heart. I have a little respite ;
 Help me, my son ; I'll try to rise ; this weakness
 Will leave me soon, and then we'll go together.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I little thought to find thee thus restor'd.
 Trust me, I joy to see thee free from pain,
 And hear thee speak ; the marks of death were on thee ;
 Raise thyself up ; thy friends here, if thou wilt,
 Shall carry thee, 'twill be no burthen to them
 If we request it.

O 4

PHI-

O ! fair, &c. Mr. Brumoy here begins his fourth act, which is certainly very absurd, as there is not the least pause of action, or vacancy of scene, Philoctetes awaking immediately after the last speech of the chorus, who observed his eyes opening ; besides that, the 3d act is thus render'd most preposterously short ; though the French critic remarks, that it is, notwithstanding, a compleat act ; "*suivant l' idée des Grecs,*" "*according to the idea of the Greeks.*" One may venture however to pronounce, that if the Greeks had divided their tragedies into acts, they would have done it with more judgment.

200 PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES.

No; thy hand alone;

I will not trouble them; 'twill be enough
If they can bear with me and my distemper,
When we embark.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well, be it so, but rise.

[Philoctetes rises.

PHILOCTETES.

O never fear; I'll rise as well as ever.

[Exeunt.

A C T IV.

SCENE I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

HOW shall I act?

PHI-

I'll rise as well as ever. The end of the 3d act (if an act there must be) may, I think, with greater propriety be placed here; as Philoctetes may be supposed to creep into his cave to look for the plant which he mentioned, and Neoptolemus to go in with him, so that the stage would be left void. This act, even thus extended, is not half so long as the preceding; the division, however, is better than Brumoy's.

How shall I act? Neoptolemus, who, as I before observed, is described to us as of an honest and ingenuous disposition, being deeply affected by the distress and anguish of Philoctetes, softened at the same time by the confidence which this unhappy man had reposed in him, and reflecting on the solemn contract he had just made, is struck with horror and remorse at the thought of such treachery and baseness; he advances in a pensive posture, and speaks to him-
self

PHILOCTETES.

What says my son?

Alas!

I know not what to say; my doubtful mind-----

PHILOCTETES.

Talk'd you of doubts? you did not surely.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ay,

That's my misfortune.

PHILOCTETES.

Is then my distress

The cause at last you will not take me with you?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

All is distress and mis'ry, when we act

Against our nature, and consent to ill.

PHILOCTETES.

But sure to help a good man in misfortunes

Is not against thy nature.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Men will call me

A villain; that distracts me.

PHILOCTETES.

Not for this,

For what thou mean'st to do thou may'st deserve it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What shall I do? direct me, Jove! To hide

What

self without regarding Philoctetes, who is at a loss to comprehend him, till at last he opens his heart and confesses the design; this gives a new and sudden turn to the plot, and prepares the necessary appearance of Ulysses. Thus does every circumstance in this excellent tragedy arise naturally from that which goes before it, and all the various parts of the edifice contribute to the strength, symmetry and beauty of the whole.

202 PHILOCTETES.

What I shou'd speak, and tell a base untruth,
Were double guilt.

PHILOCTETES.

He purposes at last,
I fear it much, to leave me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Leave thee? No.
But how to make thee go with pleasure hence,
There I'm distress'd.

PHILOCTETES.

I understand thee not;
What means my son?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I can no longer hide
The dreadful secret from thee; thou art going
To Troy, ev'n to the Greeks, to the Atridæ.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! what say'st thou?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Do not weep, but hear me.
PHILOCTETES.

What must I hear? what wilt thou do with me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

First, set thee free; then carry thee, my friend,
To conquer Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

Is this indeed thy purpose?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

This am I bound to do.

PHILOCTETES.

Then am I lost,

Undone, betray'd; canst thou, my friend, do this?

Give me my arms again.

NEOP.

PHILOCTETES. 203

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It cannot be.

I must obey the pow'rs who sent me hither;
Justice enjoins; the common cause demands it.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou worst of men, thou vile artificer
Of fraud most infamous, what hast thou done?
How have I been deceiv'd? dost thou not blush
To look upon me, to behold me thus
Beneath thy feet imploring? base betrayer!
To rob me of my bow, the means of life,
The only means; give 'em, restore 'em to me;
Do not take all: alas! he hears me not,
Nor deigns to speak, but casts an angry look
That says, I never shall be free again.
O! mountains, rivers, rocks, and savage herds!
To you I speak, to you alone I now
Must breathe my sorrows; you are wont to hear
My sad complaints, and I will tell you all
That I have suffer'd from Achilles' son;
Who, bound by solemn oath to bear me hence
To my dear native soil, now sails for Troy.

The

Thou worst of men. The original is $\alpha \pi \rho \sigma \tau \upsilon$, which, according to the scholiast, was meant for a pun on the word Πυρρος, Pyrrhus, the first and proper name of Neoptolemus. Brumoy translates it, 'O! rage digne de ton nom.' I thought so poor a quibble might as well be omitted.

He hears me not. Neoptolemus repenting of his perfidy and lost in thought, is debating within himself, whether he shall restore the arrows to Philoctetes; he walks about therefore in great agitation of mind, and gives no attention to what is said to him; this whole scene is full of action, and the variety of passions, expressed in the countenance and gesture of both, must have had a fine effect in the representation.

204 PHILOCTETES.

The perjur'd wretch first gave his plighted hand,
 Then stole the sacred arrows of my friend,
 The son of Jove, the great Alcides; those
 He means to shew the Greeks, to snatch me hence,
 And boast his prize; as if poor Philoctetes,
 This empty shade, were worthy of his arm;
 Had I been what I was, he ne'er had thus
 Subdu'd me, and ev'n now to fraud alone
 He owes the conquest; I have been betray'd.
 Give me my arms again, and be thyself
 Once more; O! speak; thou wilt not; then I'm lost.
 O! my poor hut! again I come to thee,
 Naked and destitute of food, once more
 Receive me, here to dye; for now, no longer
 Shall my swift arrow reach the flying prey,
 Or on the mountains pierce the wand'ring herd;
 I shall myself afford a banquet now
 To those I us'd to feed on; they the hunters,
 And I their easy prey; so shall the blood
 Which I so oft have shed be paid by mine;
 And all this too from him whom once I deem'd
 Stranger to fraud, nor capable of ill;
 And yet I will not curse thee, till I know
 Whether thou still retain'st thy horrid purpose,
 Or dost repent thee of it; if thou dost not,
 Destruction wait thee.

CHORUS.

We attend your pleasure,

My

We attend your pleasure. Brumoy sends off the chorus towards the sea-shore immediately after the words, 'when we embark,' p. 200, and brings them back again in this place, as sent by Ulysses to know the reason of Neoptolemus's delay. This departure
 and

PHILOCTETES. 205

My royal lord, we must be gone; determine
To leave, or take him with us.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

His distress

Doth move me much; trust me, I long have felt
Compassion for him.

PHILOCTETES.

O! then by the gods

Pity me now, my son, nor let mankind
Reproach thee for a fraud so base.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

What shall I do? wou'd I were still at Scyros!
For I am most unhappy.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my son,

Thou art not base by nature, but misguided
By those who are, to deeds unworthy of thee;
Turn then thy fraud on them who best deserve it;
Restore my arms, and leave me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Speak, my friends,

What's to be done?

SCENE

and return of the chorus, which is a mere conjecture of Brumoy's, is, I think, unnecessary; besides that it is not agreeable to the conduct generally observed by Sophocles, whose chorus's always continue on the stage, unless on some very important occasion.

Speak, my friends. Neoptolemus, already resolved to atone for his crime, by restoring the arrows, applies to the chorus for their opinion, which he knew would be in favour of Philoctetes. Ulysses surprised at their unexpected delay, and impatient to be gone, leaves his ship, and, having overheard Neoptolemus, enters at this important

206 PHILOCTETES.

SCENE II.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS,
CHORUS, ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

Ha! dost thou hesitate?

Traitor! be gone. Give me the arms.

PHILOCTETES.

Ah me!

Ulysses here?

ULYSSES.

Ay! 'tis Ulysses' self

That stands before thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Then I'm lost, betray'd;

This was the cruel spoiler.

ULYSSES.

Doubt it not.

'Twas I; I do confess it.

[To Neoptolemus.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my son,

Give me them back.

ULYSSES.

It must not be; with them

Thyself must go; or we shall drag thee hence.

PHILOCTETES.

And will they force me? O! thou daring villain!

ULYS-

tant juncture. His sudden intrusion and haughty behaviour but serve to confirm Neoptolemus in his resolution. Nothing can be better imagined or conducted than the plan of this excellent drama.

ULYSSES.

They will, unless thou dost consent to go.

PHILOCTETES.

Wilt thou, O! Lemnos? wilt thou, mighty Vulcan!

With thy all-conqu'ring fire, permit me thus

To be torn from thee?

ULYSSES.

Know, great Jove himself

Doth here preside; he hath decreed thy fate,

I but perform his will.

PHILOCTETES.

Detested wretch,

Mak'st thou the gods a cover for thy crime?

Do they teach falsehood?

ULYSSES.

No, they taught me truth,

And therefore, hence; that way thy journey lyes.

[Pointing to the sea.

PHILOCTETES.

It doth not.

ULYSSES.

But, I say, it must be so.

PHILOCTETES.

And Philoctetes then was born a slave!

I did not know it.

ULYSSES.

No; I mean to place thee

Ev'n with the noblest, ev'n with those by whom

Proud Troy must perish.

PHILOCTETES.

Never will I go,

Befall what may, whilst this deep cave is open

To bury all my sorrows.

ULYS-

208 PHILOCTETES.

ULYSSES.

What wou'dst do?

PHILOCTETES.

Here throw me down, dash out my desp'rate brains:
Against this rock, and sprinkle it with my blood.

[To the Chorus.

ULYSSES.

Seize, and prevent him.

[They seize him.

PHILOCTETES.

Manacled! O! hands,

How helpless are you now! those arms, which once

[To Ulysses.

Protected, thus torn from you! thou abandon'd,
Thou shameless wretch! from whom nor truth nor justice
Nought that becomes the gen'rous mind can flow,
How hast thou us'd me! how betray'd! suborn'd
This stranger, this poor youth, who worthier far
To be my friend than thine, was only here
Thy instrument; he knew not what he did,
And now, thou see'st, repents him of the crime
Which brought such guilt on him, such woes on me.
But thy foul foul, which from its dark recess
Trembling looks forth, beheld him void of art,
Unwilling as he was, instructed him,
And made him soon a master in deceit.
I am thy pris'ner now; ev'n now thou mean'st
To drag me hence, from this unhappy shore
Where first thy malice left me, a poor exile,

Deserted,

From its dark recess, &c. The Greek is 'δια μυχου κατανοω',
'per latebras prospiciens; the expression is remarkable, and the
translation therefore almost literal.

Deserted, friendless, and tho' living, dead
 To all mankind; perish the vile betrayer!
 O! I have curs'd thee often, but the gods
 Will never hear the pray'rs of Philoctetes.
 Life and its joys are thine; whilst I unhappy
 Am but the scorn of thee, and the Atridæ,
 Thy haughty masters; fraud and force compell'd thee,
 Or thou had'st never sail'd with them to Troy.
 I lent my willing aid; with sev'n brave ships
 I plough'd the main to serve 'em; in return
 They cast me forth, disgrac'd me, left me here;
 Thou say'st they did it; they impute the crime
 To thee; and what will you do with me now?
 And whither must I go? what end, what purpose,
 Cou'd urge thee to it? I am nothing, lost
 And dead already; wherefore, tell me, wherefore?
 Am I not still the same detested burthen,
 Loathsome and lame? Again must Philoctetes
 Disturb your holy rites? If I am with you,
 How can you make libations? That was once
 Your vile pretence for inhumanity.
 O! may you perish for the deed! The gods
 Will grant it sure, if justice be their care,
 And that it is, I know. You had not left
 Your native soil to seek a wretch like me,
 Had not some impulse from the pow'rs above
 Spite of yourselves, ordain'd it; O! my country,

P

And

Fraud and force compelled thee. Ulysses, unwilling to go among the other chiefs to the siege of Troy, feigned himself mad; but being detested by Palamedes, was after all obliged to join them.

Am I not still. This is mentioned in the first scene as the reason assigned for exposing Philoctetes on the island; the sarcasm therefore is just and natural.

210 PHILOCTETES.

And you, O! gods, who look upon this deed,
Punish, in pity to me, punish all
The guilty band! could I behold them perish,
My wounds were nothing; that wou'd heal them all.

[to Ulysses.

CHORUS.

Observe, my lord, what bitterness of soul
His words express; he bends not to misfortune,
But seems to brave it.

ULYSSES.

I cou'd answer him,
Were this a time for words; but now, no more
Than this----I act as best befits our purpose.
Where virtue, truth, and justice are requir'd,
Ulysses yields to none; I was not born
To be o'ercome, and yet submit to thee.
Let him remain. Thy arrows shall suffice;
We want thee not; Teucer can draw thy bow
As well as thou; myself, with equal strength
Can aim the deadly shaft, with equal skill.
What cou'd thy presence do? let Lemnos keep thee.
Farewel! perhaps the honours, once design'd
For thee, may be reserv'd to grace Ulysses.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! shall Greece then see my deadliest foe
Adorn'd with arms which I alone shou'd bear?

ULYSSES.

No more: I must be gone.

PHI-

Teucer can draw thy bow. Teucer was accounted one of the best archers in the Grecian army, though Menelaus, we may remember, reproaches him for it. See note in Ajax, p. 54.

PHILOCTETES. 211

PHILOCTETES. [to Neoptolemus.

Son of Achilles,

Thou wilt not leave me too? I must not lose

Thy converse, thy assistance.

[to Neoptolemus,

U L Y S S E S.

Look not on him;

Away, I charge thee; 'twou'd be fatal to us.

[to the chorus,

PHILOCTETES.

Will you forsake me, friends, dwells no compassion

Within your breasts for me?

[pointing to Neoptolemus,

C H O R U S.

He is our master,

We speak and act but as his will directs.

N E O P T O L E M U S.

I know he will upbraid me for this weakness,

But 'tis my nature, and I must consent,

Since Philoctetes asks it; stay you with him,

Till to the gods our pious pray'rs we offer,

And all things are prepar'd for our departure;

Perhaps, mean time, to better thoughts his mind

May turn relenting; we must go: remember

When we shall call you, follow instantly.

[Exit with Ulysses.

P 2

SCENE

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my poor hut! and is it then decreed
 Again I come to thee to part no more,
 To end my wretched days in this sad cave,
 The scene of all my woes? for whither now
 Can I betake me? who will feed, support,
 Or cherish Philoctetes? not a hope
 Remains for me. O! that th' impetuous storms
 Wou'd bear me with them to some distant clime!
 For I must perish here.

CHORUS.

Unhappy man!

Thou hast provok'd thy fate; thyself alone
 Art to thyself a foe, to scorn the good,
 Which wisdom bids thee take, and chuse misfortune.

PHILOCTETES.

Wretch that I am, to perish here alone!
 O! I shall see the face of man no more,
 Nor shall my arrows pierce their winged prey,
 And bring me sustenance! such vile delusions

Us'd

O my poor hut, &c. From this place, to the words 'O! ye have
 'brought back once more, &c.' the Greek is all strophe and anti-
 strophe, set to music, and sung alternately by Philoctetes and the
 chorus.

Th' impetuous storms, &c. The Greek is *πτοχάδες* or *πτοχάδες*,
 which the scholiasts interpret, harpies. Rattallerus and Brumoy,
 whom I have here follow'd, render it, storms, which is the most
 natural and obvious sense.

PHILOCTETES. 213

Us'd to betray me ! O ! that pains, like those
I feel, might reach the author of my woes !

CHORUS.

The gods decreed it ; we are not to blame ;
Heap not thy curses therefore on the guiltless,
But take our friendship.
[pointing to the sea-shore.

PHILOCTETES.

Behold him there ;
Ev'n now I see him laughing me to scorn
On yonder shore, and in his hands the darts
He waves triumphant, which no arms but these
Had ever borne. O ! my dear glorious treasure!
Hadst thou a mind to feel th' indignity,
How wou'dst thou grieve to change thy noble master,
The friend of great Alcides, for a wretch
So vile, so base, so impious as Ulysses !

CHORUS.

Justice will ever rule the good man's tongue,
Nor from his lips, reproach and bitterness
Invidious flow ; Ulysses, by the voice
Of Greece appointed, only fought a friend
To join the common cause, and serve his country.

PHILOCTETES.

Hear me, ye wing'd inhabitants of air,
And you, who on these mountains love to feed,
My savage prey, whom once I cou'd pursue ;
Fearful no more of Philoctetes, fly
This hollow rock, I cannot hurt you now ;
You need not dread to enter here ; alas !
You now may come, and in your turn regale
On these poor limbs, when I shall be no more.

P 3

Where

The author of my woes. Ulysses.

214 PHILOCTETES.

Where can I hope for food? or who can breathe
This vital air, when life-preserving earth
No longer will assist him?

CHORUS.

By the gods
Let me entreat thee, if thou dost regard
Our master, and thy friend, come to him now,
Whilst thou mayst 'scape this sad calamity;
Who but thyself wou'd chuse to be unhappy
That cou'd prevent it?

PHILOCTETES.

O! you have brought back
Once more the sad remembrance of my griefs;
Why, why my friends, wou'd you afflict me thus?

CHORUS.

Afflict thee, how?

PHILOCTETES.

Think you I'll e'er return
To hateful Troy?

CHORUS.

We wou'd advise thee to it.

PHILOCTETES.

I'll hear no more. Go, leave me.

CHORUS.

That we shall
Most gladly; to the ships, my friends, away; [Going.
Obey your orders.

[Stops them.

PHILOCTETES.

By protecting Jove,

Who

Life preserving earth. The Greek is remarkably soft and elegant,
Βίος ὑποσάσα.

PHILOCTETES. 215

Who hears the suppliant's pray'r, do not forsake me.

[Returning.

CHORUS.

Be calm then.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my friends! will you then stay?

Do, by the gods I beg you.

CHORUS.

Why that groan?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! I dye! my wound, my wound! hereafter

What can I do? you will not leave me; hear----

CHORUS.

What can'st thou say we do not know already?

PHILOCTETES.

O'erwhelm'd by such a storm of griefs as I am,

You shou'd not thus resent a madman's phrenzy.

CHORUS.

Comply then and be happy.

PHILOCTETES.

Never, never;

Be sure of that; tho' thunder-bearing Jove

Shou'd with his light'nings blast me, wou'd I go;

No; let Troy perish, perish all the host

Who sent me here to dye; but O! my friends,

Grant me this last request.

CHORUS.

What is it? speak.

PHILOCTETES.

A sword, a dart, some instrument of death.

P 4

CHO-

My wound. The original is O! my foot, my foot, which the reader may substitute if he thinks proper.

216 PHILOCTETES.

CHORUS.

What wou'dst thou do?

PHILOCTETES.

I'd hack off ev'ry limb.

Death, my soul longs for death.

CHORUS.

But wherefore is it?

PHILOCTETES.

I'll seek my father.

CHORUS.

Whither?

PHILOCTETES.

In the tomb;

There he must be. O! Scyros, O! my country,

How cou'd I bear to see thee as I am!

I who had left thy sacred shores to aid

The hateful sons of Greece! O! misery!

[Goes into the cave.

[Exeunt.

A C T V.

S C E N E I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

E'ER now we shou'd have ta'en thee to our ships,

But that advancing this way I behold

Ulysses, and with him Achilles' son.

ULYS-

E'er now we shou'd, &c. The same Impropriety, which struck us on the opening of the fourth act, recurs with equal force at the beginning of this. The scene is not void, and consequently no such

PHILOCTETES. 217

ULYSSES.

Why this return? wherefore this haste?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I come

To purge me of my crimes.

ULYSSES.

Indeed! what crimes?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

My blind obedience to the Grecian host,
And to thy counsels.

ULYSSES.

Hast thou practis'd aught
Base, or unworthy of thee?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Yes, by art

And vile deceit betray'd th' unhappy.

ULYSSES.

Whom?

Alas! what mean you?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Nothing. But the son

Of Pæan-----

ULYSSES.

Ha! what wou'dst thou do? my heart
Misgives me. [aside.]

NEOP-

such division can take place. That of Brumoy is still more absurd, which takes in this speech to the fourth act, as if it were possible that the chorus should perceive their masters Ulysses and Neoptolemus approaching, and immediately run off the stage: it is surely much better to make them go in with Philoctetes, and come out again speaking to him still remaining in the cave.

Why this return, &c. Neoptolemus advances in haste towards the cave of Philoctetes; Ulysses apprehensive of his design, follows and expostulates with him.

218 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have ta'en his arms, and now-----

ULYSSES.

Thou wou'dst restore them! speak! is that thy purpose?
Almighty Jove!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Unjustly shou'd I keep

Another's right?

ULYSSES.

Now, by the gods, thou mean'st
To mock me; dost thou not?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If to speak truth

Be mockery.

ULYSSES.

And does Achilles' son

Say this to me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why force me to repeat

My words so often to thee?

ULYSSES.

Once to hear them

Is once indeed too much.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Doubt then no more,

For I have told thee all.

ULYSSES.

There are, remember,

There are, who may prevent thee.

NEOP-

Thou wou'dst restore them. The resolution of Neoptolemus to restore the arrows to Philoctetes gives a new turn to the plot, disconcerts the measures of Ulysses, and awakens the attention of the spectator, who expects with eagerness the consequences of it.

PHILOCTETES. 219

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Who shall dare

To thwart my purpose?

ULYSSES.

All the Grecian host,

And with them, I.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wife as thou art, Ulysses,

Thou talk'st most idly.

ULYSSES.

Wisdom is not thine

Either in word or deed.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Know, to be just

Is better far than to be wise.

ULYSSES.

But where,

Where is the justice, thus unauthoris'd,

To give a treasure back thou ow'st to me,

And to my counsels?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have done a wrong,

And I will try to make atonement for it.

ULYSSES.

Dost thou not fear the pow'r of Greece?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I fear

Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.

ULYSSES.

'Tis not with Troy then we contend, but thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know not that.

ULYS.

220 PHILOCTETES.

ULYSSES.

See'st thou this hand? behold

It grasps my sword.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Mine is alike prepar'd,

Nor seeks delay.

ULYSSES.

But I will let thee go;

Greece shall know all thy guilt, and shall revenge it.

[Exit Ulysses.]

SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

'Twas well determin'd; always be as wise

As now thou art, and thou may'st live in safety.

[approaching toward the cave.]

Ho! son of Pæan! Philoctetes, leave

Thy rocky habitation, and come forth.

PHI-

I will let thee go. Brumoy, whose notions of honour are perhaps a little too modern on the occasion, is shock'd at this appearance of cowardice in Ulysses, who after thus exasperating Neoptolemus, instead of resenting his cavalier treatment, very prudently retires, with a threat to tell the Grecians of his ill behaviour. The conduct of Sophocles in this particular is, notwithstanding, unexceptionable; for, however unavoidable a duel might have been on the French stage in such a circumstance, the antients did not see the necessity of it; their heroes, as we find in Homer, bore a great deal of bad language from each other without drawing their swords: It would therefore have been highly inconsistent with the character of the prudent Ulysses to have quarrell'd and fought with his friend, and thus put an end at once to the whole scheme of his expedition.

PHILOCTETES. 221

PHILOCTETES. [from the cave.
What noise was that? who calls on Philoctetes?
[he comes out.

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! what wou'd you, strangers? are you come
To heap fresh mis'ries on me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be of comfort,
And hear the tidings which I bring.

PHILOCTETES.

I dare not;
Thy flatt'ring tongue already hath betray'd me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And is there then no room for penitence?

PHILOCTETES.

Such were thy words, when, seemingly sincere,
Yet meaning ill, thou stol'st my arms away.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But now it is not so. I only came
To know if thou art resolute to stay,
Or sail with us.

PHILOCTETES.

No more of that; 'tis vain
And useless all.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Art thou then fix'd?

PHILOCTETES.

I am;
It is impossible to say how firmly.

NEOP-

222 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I thought I cou'd have mov'd thee, but I've done.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis well thou hast; thy labour had been vain;

For never cou'd my soul esteem the man

Who robb'd me of my dearest, best possession,

And now wou'd have me listen to his counsels;

Unworthy offspring of the best of men!

Perish th' Atridæ! perish first Ulysses!

Perish thyself!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Withhold thy imprecations,

And take thy arrows back.

PHILOCTETES.

A second time

Woud'st thou deceive me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

By th' almighty pow'r

Of sacred Jove I swear.

PHILOCTETES.

O! joyful sound!

If thou say'st truly.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Let my actions speak.

Stretch forth thy hand, and take thy arms again.

[gives him the arrows.]

S C E N E IV.

ULYSSES, PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

ULYSSES.

Witness ye gods, here in the name of Greece

And the Atridæ, I forbid it.

PHI

PHILOCTETES. 223

PHILOCTETES.

Ha!

What voice is that? Ulysses?

ULYSSES.

Ay, 'tis I,

I who perforce will carry thee to Troy

Spite of Achilles' son.

PHILOCTETES.

[raising his arm as intending to throw an arrow
at Ulysses.

Not if I aim

This shaft aright.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by the gods I beg thee

Stop thy rash hand.

[laying hold of him.

PHILOCTETES.

Let go my arm.

NEOP-

Not if I aim, &c. Ulysses, strongly opposing and protesting against the restitution of the arrows, Philoctetes no sooner regains them than, warm with resentment, he aims an arrow at his breast, but is withheld by Neoptolemus. Mr. de Fenelon, in his *Telemaque*, has varied a little from Sophocles in this particular. He supposes Ulysses to have made a sign to Neoptolemus to restore the arrows; and that Philoctetes notwithstanding, in the heat of passion, drew the bow against his enemy, but was stopt by Neoptolemus. 'I was ashamed of myself, says Philoctetes (see *Tel. b. 15.*) 'for thus using my arrows against him who had restored them to me, and at the same time could not bear the thought of being indebted for any thing to a man whom I so abhor'd.' This, as Brumoy judiciously observes, is spirited, but not agreeable to the conduct of Sophocles; as the propriety of character is destroyed by making Ulysses consent to the restoration of the arrows, and likewise by the ungenerous behaviour of Philoctetes in endeavouring to kill his benefactor.

224 PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will not.

PHILOCTETES.

Shall I not slay my enemy?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! no,

'Twou'd cast dishonour on us both.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou know'st,

These Grecian chiefs are loud pretending boasters,
Brave but in tongue, and cowards in the field.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know it; but remember, I restor'd

Thy arrows to thee, and thou hast no cause
For rage, or for complaint against thy friend.

PHILOCTETES.

I own thy goodness; thou hast shewn thyself
Worthy thy birth, no son of Sisyphus,
But of Achilles, who on earth preserv'd
A fame unspotted, and amongst the dead
Still shines superior, an illustrious shade.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Joyful I thank thee for a father's praise,
And for my own; but listen to my words,
And mark me well; misfortunes, which the gods
Infllict on mortals, they perforce must bear,
But when oppress'd by voluntary woes
They make themselves unhappy, they deserve not
Our pity or our pardon; such art thou;
Thy savage soul, impatient of advice,

Rejects

No son of Sisyphus. See note, p. 176. The injuries he had received from Ulysses are always uppermost in his thoughts, and he takes every opportunity of shewing his resentment of them.

PHILOCTETES. 223

Rejects the wholesome counsel of thy friend;
And treats him like a foe; but I will speak,
Jove be my witness! therefore hear my words,
And grave them in thy heart; the dire disease
Thou long hast suffer'd is from angry heav'n,
Which thus afflicts thee for thy rash approach
To the fell serpent, which on Chrysa's shore
Watch'd o'er the sacred treasures; know beside,
That whilst the sun in yonder east shall rise,
Or in the west decline, distemper'd still
Thou ever shalt remain, unless to Troy
Thy willing mind transport thee; there the sons
Of Æsculapius shall restore thee, there
By my assistance shalt thou conquer Troy;
I know it well; for that prophetic sage,
The Trojan captive Helenus, foretold
It shou'd be so; 'proud Troy (he added then)
' This very year must fall, if not, my life
' Shall answer for the falsehood.' therefore yield
Thus to be deem'd the first of Grecians, thus
By Pæan's fav'rite sons to be restor'd,
And thus mark'd out the conqueror of Troy,
Is sure distinguish'd happiness.

PHILOCTETES.

O! life w

Detested, why wilt thou still keep me here,
Why not dismiss me to the tomb? alas! what
What can I do? how can I disbelieve

Q

My

On Chrysa's shore. See the first note, p. 133.
How can I disbelieve, &c. Philoctetes, moved by the generosity
of Neoptolemus in restoring the arrows, is almost persuaded to lay
aside his resentment and sail for Troy, but at the same time cannot

My gen'rous friend? I must consent, and yet
 Can I do this, and look upon the sun?
 Can I behold my friends, will they forgive,
 Will they associate with me after this?
 And you, ye heav'nly orbs that roll around me,
 How will you bear to see me link'd with those
 Who have destroy'd me, ev'n the sons of Atreus,
 Ev'n with Ulysses, source of all my woes?
 My suff'rings past I cou'd forget, but O!
 I dread the woes to come, for well I know
 When once the mind's corrupted, it brings forth
 Unnumber'd crimes, and ills to ills succeed.
 It moves my wonder much, that thou, my friend,
 Shou'dst thus advise me, whom it ill becomes
 To think of Troy; I rather had believ'd
 Thou wou'dst have sent me far, far off from those
 Who have defrauded thee of thy just right,
 And gave thy arms away; are these the men
 Whom thou wou'dst serve? whom thou wou'dst thus
 compel me
 To save and to defend? it must not be.
 Remember, O! my son, the solemn oath
 Thou gav'st to bear me to my native soil;
 Do this, my friend, remain thyself at Scyros,
 And leave these wretches to be wretched still.
 Thus shalt thou merit double thanks, from me,
 And from my father; nor by succour giv'n
 To vile betrayers prove thyself as vile.

NEOP-

bear the thought of joining Ulysses and the Atridae; this doubt
 and uncertainty causes a new situation in the drama, which keeps
 up the attention of the audience. One cannot help observing with
 what a variety of interesting circumstances Sophocles has contrived
 to embellish a subject so simple as to appear at first sight incapable of
 admitting any.

PHILOCTETES. 227

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou say'st most truly; yet confide in heav'n,
Trust to thy friend, and leave this hated place.

PHILOCTETES.

Leave it? for whom? for Troy and the Atridæ?
These wounds forbid it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

They shall all be heal'd,

Where I will carry thee.

PHILOCTETES.

An idle tale

Thou tell'st me, surely, dost thou not?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I speak

What best may serve us both.

PHILOCTETES.

But, speaking thus,

Dost thou not fear th' offended gods?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why fear them?

Can I offend the gods by doing good?

PHILOCTETES.

What good? to whom? to me or to th' Atridæ?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I am thy friend, and therefore wou'd persuade thee.

PHILOCTETES.

And therefore give me to my foes.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

Let not misfortunes thus transport thy soul

To rage and bitterness.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou wou'dst destroy me.

Q 2

NEOP.

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NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou know'st me not.

PHILOCTETES.

I know th' Atridae well,

Who left me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

They did; yet they perhaps,

Ev'n they, O! Philoctetes, may preserve thee,

PHILOCTETES.

I never will to Troy.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What's to be done?

Since I can ne'er persuade thee, I submit;

Live on in misery.

PHILOCTETES.

Then, let me suffer;

Suffer I must; but, O! perform thy promise;

Think on thy plighted faith, and guard me home.

Instant, my friend, nor ever call back Troy

To my remembrance; I have felt enough

From Troy already.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Let us go, prepare.

PHILOCTETES.

O! glorious sound!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Bear thyself up.

PHILOCTETES.

I will,

If possible.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But how shall I escape

The wrath of Greece?

PHI.

PHILOCTETES. 229

PHILOCTETES.

O! think not of it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What

If they shou'd waste my kingdom?

PHILOCTETES.

I'll be there.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! what canst thou do?

PHILOCTETES.

And with these arrows

Of my Alcides-----

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ha! what say'st thou?

PHILOCTETES.

Drive

Thy foes before me; not a Greek shall dare

Approach thy borders.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If thou wilt do this,

Salute the earth, and instant hence. Away.

SCENE IV.

HERCULES, ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

HERCULES descends and speaks.

Stay, son of Pæan; lo! to thee 'tis giv'n

Once

Stay, son of Pæan, &c. Hercules after a life spent in the laborious service of virtue, was admitted into heaven by his father Jupiter, and rank'd among the gods. Agreeably to his character whilst upon earth, he leaves the regions of peace and happiness only to serve his country and his friend. To justify the poet, with regard to this appearance of a deity, it may not be improper here to observe, that Philoctetes is described as fierce and inexorable, with a

230 PHILOCTETES.

Once more to see and hear thy lov'd Alcides,
 Who for thy sake hath left yon heav'nly mansions,
 And comes to tell thee the decrees of Jove;
 To turn thee from the paths thou mean'st to tread,
 And guide thy footsteps right; therefore attend.
 Thou know'st what toils, what labours I endur'd,
 E'er I by virtue gain'd immortal fame;
 Thou too like me by toils must rise to glory;
 Thou too, must suffer, e'er thou can'st be happy;
 Hence with thy friend to Troy, where honour calls,
 Where health awaits thee; where, by virtue rais'd
 To highest rank, and leader of the war,
 Paris, it's hateful author, shalt thou slay,
 Lay waste proud Troy, and send thy trophies home,
 Thy valour's due reward, to glad thy fire
 On Oeta's top, the gifts which Greece bestows
 Must thou reserve to grace my fun'ral pile,
 And be a monument to after ages
 Of these all-conq'ring arms.-----Son of Achilles,

[turning to Neoptolemus.

(For

mind sower'd by injuries, and a heart harden'd by calamity; he is not to be soften'd by the art and subtlety of Ulysses, nor subdued by the honour and generosity of Neoptolemus; a change of will could not therefore take place without departing from that propriety of character which Sophocles always religiously observes. The descent of Hercules is, on this account, both necessary and beautiful; for though in some of the Greek tragedies, the interposition of the gods can perhaps hardly be justified, the severest critic will, I believe, here acknowledge the 'dignus vindice nodus' of Horace. To the manner of this appearance and the machinery made use of on the occasion we are left entire strangers; we have no lights from antiquity concerning the decorations of the theatre, and are only told in general, that they were made with the utmost splendor and magnificence; the character of Hercules during his short stay is sustained with great dignity; he says no more than what is absolutely necessary on the occasion, and then reascends,

PHILOCTETES. 231

(For now to thee I speak) remember this,
 Without his aid thou can'st not conquer Troy,
 Nor Philoctetes without thee succeed;
 Go then, and, like two lions in the field
 Roaming for prey, guard ye each other well;
 My Æsculapius will I send ev'n now
 To heal thy wounds; then go, and conquer Troy;
 But when you lay the vanquish'd city waste,
 Be careful that you venerate the gods;
 For far above all other gifts doth Jove,
 Th' almighty father, hold true piety;
 Whether we live or dye, that still survives
 Beyond the reach of fate, and is immortal.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Once more to let me hear that wish'd-for voice,
 To see thee after so long time, was bliss
 I cou'd not hope for. O! I will obey
 Thy great commands most willingly.

PHILOCTETES.

And I.

HERCULES.

Delay not then; for, lo! a prosp'rous wind
 Swells in thy sail; the time invites, adieu.

[Hercules reascends.]

SCENE

Be careful, &c. This is supposed by the commentators to convey a kind of prophetic censure of Neoptolemus, who after his return to Troy murdered the aged Priam, even at the altar of Hercæan Jove.

Whether we live or die, &c. Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, c. xiv. v. 8.

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SCENE V.

PHILOCTETES, ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

I will but pay my salutations here,
And instantly depart-----To thee, my cave,
Where I so long have dwelt, I bid farewell;
And you, ye nymphs, who on the wat'ry plains
Deign to reside, farewell; farewell the noise
Of beating waves, which I so oft have heard
From the rough sea, which by the black winds driv'n
O'erwhelm'd me thiv'ring; oft th' Hermæan mount
Echo'd my plaintive voice, by win't'ry storms
Afflicted, and return'd me groan for groan.
Now, ye fresh fountains, each Lycæan spring,
I leave you now; alas! I little thought
To leave you ever; and thou sea-girt isle,
Lemnos, farewell; permit me to depart
By thee unblam'd, and with a prosp'rous gale
To go where fate demands, where kindest friends
By counsel urge me, where all-powerful Jove
In his unerring wisdom hath decreed:

CHORUS.

Let us be gone, and to the ocean nymphs
Our humble pray'rs prefer that they wou'd all
Propitious smile, and grant us safe return.

Th' Hermæan mount. A mountain in Lemnos; though some are of opinion, that the word Hermæan is only an epithet generally appropriated to mountains, from Hermes or Mercury, the god of hills and groves.

Each Lycæan spring. Fountains sacred to Apollo Lycius.

End of the FIRST VOLUME.

